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# STRATHERN;

OR

## LIFE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

I.

PRINTED BY FAIN AND THUNOT, 28, RUE RACINE.

# STRATHERN;

OR

# LIFE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

How like a Comedy is life!
With shifting scenes and changes rife,
Some sad, some gay; but to the wise
A moral lesson each supplies.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PARIS,

PUBLISHED BY A. AND W. GALIGNANI AND C°.,
N° 18, RUE VIVIENNE.

1845.

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# STRATHERN.

## CHAPTER I.

We make ourselves a pleasant home,
  Deck'd out with all that's rich and rare,
As though we thought Death would not come
  To tear us from a scene so fair:
Or if we know he'll come, we b'lieve
  'Twill be when age has bent us low;
Ah me! how we ourselves deceive—
  Who knows when he will strike the blow?
Nor gilded hall, nor blooming bow'r,
  Can shield us from the Tyrant's sway;
He's ever near with fatal pow'r
  To snatch us from the realms of day,
And change our much-lov'd pleasant home
For the dark grave—where all must come.

It was a lovely morning towards the end of June, the hour about eleven, ere yet the freshness of early morn had passed from the balmy air, or from the blooming plants and flowers, redolent of perfume, which filled the small garden attached to a noble mansion in Arlington Street, into which the apartment about to be described opened. The said garden was bounded by St. James's Park, and divided from it only by an ornamental iron railing. Innumerable birds were flitting from the luxuriant laurustinus, which flanked the windows of this mansion, and perching on the white marble border of a limpid fountain which sent up its sparkling showers towards a sky unusually blue for our nebulous climate. The notes of these feathered choristers, mingled with the gushing sound of the water, added to the charm of the scene, and almost created a doubt whether one was indeed in the purlieus of St. James's. Seated in a library, and looking out on the little wilderness of

sweets before described, sate the owner of the mansion, a handsome young man of about five-and-twenty, only lately returned from an extended tour on the Continent. Glancing occasionally with great complacency from the blooming garden with its sparkling fountain at the exterior of the house, to the tastefully fitted-up and classically arranged library of the interior, he murmured to himself, "Yes, even Rhymer, with all the fastidiousness of taste attributed to him, must be satisfied with this apartment."

And well might Lord Wyndermere, the owner of the said library, think so, for few, however difficult to be pleased, could have found fault with it. The chamber was large and lofty; the ceiling, exquisitely painted, represented a charming group of the Muses, with their different attributes, surrounding Apollo. Bookcases of finely carved oak, the capitals of the columns that supported them, and the cornices richly gilded, were crowned by antique busts of rare beauty and great value. Between each bookcase was a niche, in which, on a pedestal, stood a statue of Parian marble, the workmanship of the best sculptors of our day; for Lord Wyndermere, although a warm admirer of the antique, was a most liberal patron of modern art. A large mirror over the low chimney-piece, itself a gem of sculpture, reflected back the garden and fountain, with the bright prismatic hues of the stained glass window, which formed a frame to the picture. On each side of this lofty mirror were suspended some of the choicest works of the ancient masters, collected with great judgment, and at a vast expense, by the father of the present Lord Wyndermere, an acknowledged connoisseur in pictures. The curtains were of the richest satin, the precise colour of the oak bookcases, and the chairs and sofas were covered with the same costly material. The uncut velvet pile carpet, of a substance which prevented a footfall from being heard, was of the peculiar tint denominated *Raphael* green, from the preference evinced for the colour by that glorious artist, and the walls were of similar hue. A *déjeuner*, served on the most delicate and costly *Sèvres* porcelain, was placed on a table near the open window, while dumb-waiters, covered with snowy damask, and piled with plate, forks, and spoons, stood near the two chairs intended for the persons who were to partake the repast. Fruit, which might be likened to the golden produce of the fabled Hesperides, if not from its bloom, at least from the enormous cost of its culture, crowned the breakfast-table, mingled with every de-

scription of cake and bread furnished by modern refinement, to stimulate the sated appetite of an epicure.

At length the expected guest arrived; and to the no slight disappointment of his host, who expected some expression of admiration at the really charming scene into which he was ushered, he took his seat at the table, placed his napkin on his knees, and began to discuss the dainties set before him. While doing so, he occasionally glanced around, but no look of satisfaction or approval marked his saturnine countenance.

"Who is your baker, my good lord?" asked he.

"He is one who appertains to my establishment at Wyndermere Castle, and is considered so good, that I had him up here."

"Umph," uttered Rhymer, in a sound half-groan, half-sigh, laying down the delicate roll he had tasted.

"I fear you do not like the rolls, will you try these breakfast-cakes? I think you vill find them good."

The breakfast-cake was cut, tasted, and almost as quickly relinquished as the roll, Mr. Rhymer's countenance becoming considerably lengthened, after the unsuccessful experiment. A new-laid egg was recommended by the host, and, having been broken, was pronounced to have the odour of the stable. A delicate slice of cold chicken was found to be tough. A *Pâté de Périgord* was declined somewhat disdainfully. The offer of cold ham or tongue met no better chance; and the chocolate was discovered to have a peculiar and not agreeable flavour. Marmalade was then tried, and with this *dernière ressource* a slight *déjeuner* was effected, to the no small discomfiture of the kind host, who saw with regret that his luxuriously-served board afforded nothing to satisfy the fastidious taste of his guest.

"What an agreeable day we had at Strathern's!" observed Lord Wyndermere, anxious to dispel the awkwardness occasioned by the total failure of his *recherché* breakfast.

"Do you think so?" was the laconic reply of Mr. Rhymer. "For my part," continued he, "I saw little to admire in the *fête*. There was, it is true, the same ostentatious display of splendour which always characterizes that gentleman's *fêtes*, but the evident effort to make the thing go off well, and the superabundant appliances for amusement, in my opinion, defeated the end aimed at. It was like the apple-pie, with too many quinces."

"You must, indeed, be difficult to be pleased; for surely nothing was left undone to contribute to the pleasure of the guests?"

"Except the host's concealing his self-complacency on the occa-

sion. The too visible display of that, I confess, interfered very much with mine, as he moved about smiling on all, saying something civil to everybody—ay, even to those paid for exhibiting their talents to the company."

"There is no satisfying you, Mr. Rhymer. It was only a few days ago that I heard you find fault with Melbrook for being a careless Amphitryon, and wandering among his *convives*, as if he were only a visiter, like the rest."

"Yes, my good lord, I *did* find fault, for I thought that the *nonchalance* of Melbrook towards his aristocratic guests, a mere *parvenu* as he is known to be, amounted to little short of insolence. With Strathern, who is a man of high family, it is quite different. *Nonchalance* would *in him* have been much more *comme il faut*, in my opinion, than the *empressement* he displayed, reminding one of a provincial Boniface, 'on hospitable thoughts intent,' thinking of every-one's comfort but his own."

"I observed nothing of all this. *Au contraire*, I consider Strathern to be the best bred, as well as the most hospitable man I know."

"And so, I dare say, think many others; for people are too indolent to differ from the herd; and when a peculiarly indulgent person like your lordship has pronounced such an opinion, others will not be found wanting to adopt it."

"I disclaim all right to indulgence with regard to Strathern and his *fête*," observed Lord Wyndermere, "for neither require it. How well the *Diva* sang there; I thought I never heard her in such good voice."

"Strange to say, it struck me—but it must have been only fancy—that she sang terribly out of tune. The ballet, too, went off flatly; the *danseuses* could not leave the earth, of which they seemed to me to form too palpable a portion to give any pleasure by their evolutions. It was a great mistake in Strathern to adopt this innovation, unless, indeed, he had constructed an inclined plane on the principle of the theatres, where these *odalisques* exhibit their feats, and sleight of feet, and by the elasticity of which they are enabled to ascend into air for a brief moment. On this ascent depends all the poetry of dancing, and consequently its charm—at least for refined minds. Without it the best *danseuse* appears to no greater advantage than the Blowsabellas who figure in barbarous Scots reels and Irish jigs, and so, to my eyes, appeared the graceful Taglioni, and the bounding Cerito at Strathern's *fête*."

"I see that you are determined to discover faults: but ought not the intention of the giver of the entertainment to find favour with you! Consider the lavish expense to furnish amusement."

"I *have* considered it, and the motive too, as I formerly stated—Ostentation."

"I differ with you in opinion, Mr. Rhymer."

"Very naturally. I am, as every body will tell you, very old, and my opinions are influenced by my age, while your lordship is young, *very* young indeed," said the speaker, more as if in pity than in approval.

"I hear we are to have a fine concert at the Duke of Aberfield's."

"I dare say it will be a failure, as all his Grace of Aberfield's concerts are. The Duke seems never to lose the consciousness of his rank, and wishes that the weight of his ducal coronet should oppress others as much as it evidently does himself, poor vain man! Would you believe it?—when he writes to me, he commences with 'My good Sir'—yes, positively, My good Sir—ay, and ends in the same style."

"I believe that he writes 'My good Lord,' to me," said Lord Wyndermere, who, never having attached the slightest importance to the point, remembered not, at the moment, what were the precise words in which the Duke of Aberfield usually addressed him, but who, observing that the *amour-propre* of Mr. Rhymer was wounded by the imagined slight, wished to soothe it by the assertion.

"Could you refer to a note from his ungracious grace, to satisfy me that he uses peers as disdainfully as he does commoners?" said the cynic.

"Yes, I think there is one in this drawer," replied Lord Wyndermere, opening one in the library-table, from which he drew a note from the Duke, and handed it to Mr. Rhymer.

"I was right," said the latter, with bitterness, as he glanced over the note; he writes to you 'My dear Lord;' it is only to persons like me that he uses the word *good* instead of *dear*. But how could a plain 'Mr.', whatever might be his claims to notice, be dear to the Duke of Aberfield, unless, indeed, he was sufficiently skilled in antiquarian lore to discover in what degree of consanguinity his grace stands to the first of the Scottish kings?"

"You are severe on him," observed Lord Wyndermere; "I never noticed anything offensive in the manners or bearing of the Duke; both are stately, I own, but no one can be more courteous."

"Again you are too indulgent, my lord, indeed you are. You

will spoil society, as children are spoilt, by too much kindness. It won't do, it will not, I assure you. I am an old man, though not nearly so old as some of my kind friends would wish to make me out, and I know by experience that the good-natured are trifled with and laughed at, while the fastidious and severe are feared and respected."

"*Your* experience has, I should think, not been much exercised in the good-natured line," said Lord Wyndermere, laughing. "Or was it, after having tried its inefficacy, as a means of acquiring popularity in society, that you had recourse to..."

"*Ill-nature*, you would say," resumed Mr. Rhymer. "Well, be it so; call me morose, cynic, what you will, but defend me from being confounded with the grinning herd who flock from house to house, bepraising all and every thing, pleased with every body, and most with self. *A propos* of being pleased, as you have wished for my opinion of your new house, may I tell you candidly that I don't like it."

"Indeed, I am sorry for that."

"This library, *par exemple*, is not fitted up to my taste. Oak and gold is bad. Gilding should only be used in bookcases for ladies; *they* like glitter and show; but a man's library should be grave and plain. Then your books are too richly bound; they look as if they belonged to a *petit-maître*, or a retired citizen. Books, when very finely bound, convey the notion that they are not meant to be much read. The room altogether looks too gay for a place to study in. The hangings, too, are not sufficiently subdued; the frames of the mirrors and pictures are too rich. In short, my dear lord, the *ensemble* is not precisely such as a man of refined taste could approve."

Having rendered his host thoroughly dissatisfied with all that had previously pleased him in the arrangement of his house, Mr. Rhymer wished him good morning, saying that he must call on the Duchess of Rochdale, who wanted to consult him on a matter of taste.

"And this is the man whom I heard last night uttering the most flattering compliments to Strathern about his *fête*," said Lord Wyndermere to himself. "Where are we to look for truth, if not among those whose position and age should exempt them from the incentive to deception? I wish I had not asked the old cynic to come and see my house; he will now go and decry it to every one he meets, and, after having incurred a heavy expense in furnishing it, I shall be considered a man of bad taste. The only person who is really frank

and kind is Strathern, and yet how old Rhymer abused *his* taste! I thought this room perfection, and now—yet what a fool I am to be put out of conceit with it, because it happens not to please that ill-natured old man, who has always something spiteful to say of every thing and every body! I wonder people tolerate him, for I am sure I can see no reason."

"He is rich, and that, in this great wilderness of brick and mortar, is the best of all reasons," said Strathern, who had entered the library, while Lord Wyndermere was indulging his soliloquy aloud, and was so engrossed by the subject of it that he had not heard the announcement of his visiter's name by the servant who had ushered him in.

"And so you not only think, my dear lord—a rare occupation for a man of fashion in London to indulge in—but what is more dangerous, you think *aloud*," resumed Strathern, after the first salutations had past. "I met Rhymer, near your door, and he looked so unusually complacent, that I guessed he had been at his old work, endeavouring to render some one dissatisfied. He has in some measure succeeded, if I may judge from the few words I heard you pronounce. Is it not so?"

Lord Wyndermere acknowledged the fact, and repeated the comments made by Mr. Rhymer on his house.

"You must not be disconcerted by his remarks," observed Strathern: "for, if I may be allowed to parody the observation applied to Charles II., I should say that Rhymer is known never to have *said* a kind thing, or never to have *done* an unkind one. He has come to the assistance of many a man of genius in those vicissitudes to which individuals of that class more than any other are liable, when they depend on literature for support. Towards artists, his good word to would-be patrons, possessed of more gold than taste, has never been wanting; yet, such is his peculiarity, that, while ready to *serve*, he is seldom willing to avoid offending, and evidently finds a pleasure in saying disagreeable things. Even his compliments, and they are few and far between, have something in them which leave those present when they are paid in doubt whether they do not admit of another and less kind interpretation, although the individual to whom they are addressed may not be aware of it. Nevertheless, on the whole, perhaps the system of Rhymer, if system it be, is preferable to that of the generality of persons, who make it a point to *say* civil things, and leave undone kind ones."

"You take the good-natured side of the question, but so you

always do," replied Lord Wyndermere. "I confess that I am less indulgent."

"I find it more agreeable to do so. My philosophy has taught me that indulgence to the foibles of others, and above all to those which characterize society, brings its own exceeding great reward, in an equanimity of humour and cheerfulness, incompatible with a cynical disposition, which discovers evils it cannot hope to amend, and dwells more on the dark than on the bright side of human nature. I know many who can see in Rhymer only the ill-natured satirist, who, by a sneer, or an epigrammatic *bon mot*, wounds their vanity, while I endeavour to forget this weakness in him, and remember the good he *does*, not the evil he *speaks*."

"But is there not something egotistical in your philosophy?"

"*Peut-être, mais àquoi bon* is that of the cynic? Does is correct the errors it exposes, or does it render the discoverer a better man? Were we all, when detecting defects in our acquaintances, to render justice to the good qualities to which they are frequently allied, be assured the balance would be frequently in favour of the latter, and this conviction, by giving us a better opinion of our species, would ensure us more felicity."

"Yours, my dear Strathern, must be a happy temperament."

"I believe you are right, and there is a great deal in this, more, ay much more, than people imagine. Half the defects of mankind may be traced to an unhappy temperament, while the very victims to this pervading and baneful influence are themselves unconscious of its existence. It supplies gall to the pen of the satirist, and venom to the tongue of the wit. May not Rhymer's sarcastic *bons mots* and insidious compliments be accounted for by this constitutional *malaise*, which, continually preying on him, engenders the bitterness which finds so little indulgence, even from those who are aware of his good qualities? Look at the countenances of those known to be sarcastic, and you will observe the yellow tinge, dull eye, and scornful lip which indicate confirmed derangement of the biliary system, producing one of the greatest and least-pitied of all the evils to which poor humanity is heir, and which, whether leading, as it frequently does, to insanity, or exhibiting itself in bitter satire, is equally entitled to commiseration."

"Then you are disposed to think that,

> "'When poor witlings go astray,
> Their bile is more in fault than they.'"

"Even so; and I would recommend a skilful physician, in pre-

ference to a moralist, for its cure. I never peruse any of the spiteful diatribes of the day, however witty, without a sentiment of pity for its author, the acuteness of whose sufferings, under his peculiar disease, may be judged by the bitterness of his effusions; and I learn almost to forgive Swift his malice, when I reflect on the physical cause that led to such a moral result. But a truce to philosophy. Let me go over your house, which, from the specimen of it afforded by this library, must, I am persuaded, be arranged with excellent taste."

"You mean to indemnify me for the disapproval of Rhymer; but now that you have initiated me into the mysteries of physical causes and their effects, while pardoning *his* censure, I shall be inclined to question the justice of *your praise*, and attribute it to the happy temperament which enables you to see everything *en beau*."

"And so turn the arms with which my philosophy has furnished you against myself? You must not, however, mistake me so far as to imagine that I assign an undue weight to physical causes, or that I doubt the efficacy of moral influence to subdue their effects, if powerless to eradicate the cause. Observe the beneficent action of a following quickly the unkind word, like the spear of Telephus healing the wound it inflicted. Is not this a convincing proof of the moral influence exercised to atone for the physical?"

"You have taught me to feel much more leniently than I was disposed to do towards the failings of the cynical Rhymer, and henceforth, when I encounter persons with a similar taste for saying ill-natured things, I will hope that like him they atone for their words by their deeds."

"Ill-regulated minds and unhealthy bodies produce more cynics than bad hearts. Nay, wit itself, that 'lightning of the mind,' frequently tempts its possessors to give utterance to *bons mots* bearing the stamp of ill-nature, when that sentiment really had no part in dictating them. The wish to shine in society—and what method of doing this is so easy for a clever person as brilliant sallies and pointed sarcasms?—originates most of the *méchancetés spirituelles*, which, though they cause a wit to be feared in society, render him also courted, and establish for him a certain reputation, which, in my opinion, is neither to be desired nor envied."

"Yet I have known some men who, though acknowledged wits, seldom, if ever, indulged in the *malice* supposed to appertain to their craft."

"So have I also, and this self-control impressed me with a very

high opinion in their favour. To resist giving expression to the thousand brilliant *mots* suggested by a lively imagination called into action by some folly or mistake, committed by the less gifted with whom he associates, *proves* at once that he who practises this restraint possesses three estimable qualities—a fine understanding, a good heart, and a true politeness."

"It is much to be wished that such examples among men of wit were more common. It would lessen the jealousy and dislike entertained against them by those who are more calculated to dread than to comprehend their intellectual superiority."

The striking of the *pendule* on the mantelpiece warned Strathern that his visit had already passed the usual time allowed for morning calls, and that he had not yet seen more than the library of Lord Wyndermere. He therefore proposed to his friend, if not inconvenient, to let him see the dining and drawing-rooms, apologizing, at the same time, for having already so unreasonably trespassed on his leisure.

"Far from it, I assure you," replied Lord Wyndermere. "Your visit has given me the greatest pleasure—a pleasure, too, so rarely enjoyed in this noisy, bustling town, where every one seems to be in too great a hurry to pause, to listen, or to converse rationally, that I can duly appreciate a sober hour's chat, exempt from scandal and ill-nature, and only wish I could more frequently count on such a gratification."

The *salle à manger*, divided by a large ante-room from the library, opened on one side into an extensive conservatory, filled with the choicest plants and flowers. The walls were encrusted with exquisite fragments of *alto* and *basso rilievo* brought from Greece and Italy, and some noble statues by the best of our modern sculptors, formed the sole ornaments. The drawing-rooms, three *en suite*, were spacious and lofty, and were furnished in the style of Louis XIV. Nothing could be in better keeping. Splendour and taste were happily blended, and the union produced the most charming effect. The admirable collection of pictures which graced the silk-panelled walls entirely engrossed Strathern's attention. He coul have devoted days instead of hours to their contemplation, and was pleased to find that Lord Wyndermere, with all his reserve of manner, was almost as enthusiastic an admirer of fine paintings as himself, and, what is more rare, an excellent judge. Nothing so soon leads to an agreeable familiarity as the discovery of a similarity of tastes, and the two friends felt, as they conversed on the comparative merits

of the different masters whose works were before them, that they had never really felt drawn towards each other so much as during their *tête à tête* visit of that day, and they mutually promised that the pleasure they then enjoyed should often be repeated.

"I see that you, like me, feel that the true way of encouraging art is to live surrounded by the best specimens it can produce," said Strathern.

"Those who fill galleries, which they only enter when they wish to exhibit the treasures they contain, are not, in my opinion, real lovers of the fine arts," observed Lord Wyndermere. "I like to have statues, pictures, and books, continually within my reach. To be able to look from a book to some beautiful picture or fine statue, until we grow to love these possessions as our household gods, is the way to enjoy them, and this I have long learned to do. My collection, too, is endeared to me by being associated in my mind with him who selected the greater portion of it, and who loved it as well as I do—my excellent father; and I seldom look at any of these treasures without thanking him who provided and taught me to appreciate them."

"You must come and see me *sans cérémonie*," said Strathern, more and more pleased with his host, "and we will examine my collection free from interruption. You have only seen my pictures and statues in a crowd; indeed I should be considered *exigeant*, or, as our countrymen say, a bore, if I asked the generality of people to visit the works of art I possess; but you, who have proved how well you understand these matters, will not consider *me* so, and will soon come to Strathern House."

"We have some liberal patrons of art in England among the nobility and gentry," observed Lord Wyndermere, "and still more among what are designated the middle classes, men who, having made large fortunes, have the good taste to expend a considerable portion of their wealth in the acquisition of fine pictures. I have been to see many collections in houses, the names of whose owners I had not heard until named to me by some of our best artists as their most generous patrons, and I have been delighted at witnessing the gems they possess, and their just appreciation of them. I confess to you I have felt proud of England when I visited those collections, and was more than ever ready to admit the justice of a celebrated foreigner's remark, that the middle class in England is, indeed, most estimable, possessing much of the quality of its favourite beverage, beer, having neither the froth attributed to the

fashionable portion of the highest class, nor the dregs which appertain to the lower."

"You are right in agreeing in the opinion, for the more I see of my countrymen, the more am I convinced of the peculiar worth of this portions of them. What good men of business they make in the House of Commons! Their habits of application, and constant contact with the world, give them a great advantage over the generality of country gentlemen, and enable them to discern much more quickly the practical from the theoretical, in the affairs brought before their notice. Education has made great strides in England, much greater than those who look only at the surface of society are prepared to admit, and nowhere can one be made so fully aware of this gratifying fact, as in the houses of commercial and professional men. Look at their families too. The women with cultivated minds, and highly accomplished, fitted not only to enter the most polished society, but to adorn it; and the young men prepared to distinguish themselves not merely in the professions to which they have been bred, but to acquit themselves in a more elevated sphere whenever they may be called to it."

"How different to the citizens of fifty years ago that we read of, when the accumulation of wealth, and sordid habits of economy, were their peculiar and striking characteristics!"

"Yes, the march of intellect has been indeed a triumphant one in England; and though some portion of our population may have been dazzled by too much light, as those long kept in darkness are apt to be when first it breaks on them, and may not see their way so clearly as could be wished, every day will bring an amelioration of the *few disadvantages* peculiar to the rapid transitions from a stage of comparative ignorance to one of civilization and refinement."

"The old adage, 'a little learning is a dangerous thing,' is a true one; the draught has now been so freely dispensed, that the danger to be apprehended from superficial knowledge will soon disappear. Good bye, let me see you soon."

## CHAPTER II.

"The early cultivation of a taste for the Fines Arts is one of the best preventives against the temptations to which so many young men of large fortunes fall a prey, when first emerged from the trammels of a college life; for he, who finds pleasure in the contemplation of a fine picture or statue, will be little disposed to enter into the coarse and sensual amusements in which young men with less refined tastes pass their time."

Having introduced our hero to our readers, it is necessary that we should make them acquainted with his birth, parentage, and education. Born of an ancient family, and allied to some of the noblest in the land, it was his misfortune to become an orphan while yet in his childhood, his parents being snatched from life, ere he had attained his ninth year. From them he inherited good looks, abilities of no common order, and a fortune, which though not above half the amount guessed at by the world, always so liberal in giving to the rich, was, nevertheless, quite equal to the support of an expenditure on a scale of almost princely hospitality. The guardian, to whose care Strathern had been bequeathed, was a bachelor of great wealth and acknowledged taste. In his mansion, filled with works of art in painting and sculpture, and adorned with all that could interest the virtuoso, or charm the man of refined taste, his ward had been wont to pass the vacations from school, and had there imbibed that knowledge of art and love for its *chefs-d'œuvre*, which, when implanted in early life, remains, a distinguishing characteristic through existence, however protracted it may be. The education bestowed on Strathern was such as to cultivate to the utmost extent the natural abilities with which he was blessed, and he applied himself with a diligence to the acquirement of all that could be taught, that won the admiration of his contemporaries and the esteem of his tutor. He left Christ Church with a reputation for talent and scholarship, that might have excited the envy of his companions, had not his freedom from vanity and his kindness of heart made him so many friends that envy was lost in esteem, or, if not lost, at least it was silenced by the well-merited popularity he had attained.

Perhaps the generosity of Strathern had something to do in gaining him this general good-will. The allowance allotted him by his

guardian being on an unusually liberal scale, he was enabled to extricate many of his college friends from the embarrassments into which their improvidence not unfrequently plunged them; and he possessed the rare and difficult to be acquired art of conferring favours in a manner which precluded ingratitude, by converting the obliged debtors into devoted friends, through the tact and delicacy with which he came forward to their assistance. The gratitude which his delicate mode of rendering services, still more than the value of the act itself, awakened, he attributed to the natural goodness of those he served, not aware that similar or even greater benefits, if conferred in a different mode, would have been forgotten in the humiliation they occasioned; hence Strathern formed a somewhat erroneous opinion of mankind in general, and invested those of it, in particular, with whom he associated, with many qualities of which they possessed barely the semblance. His was a fine nature, and his defects, if defects they might be denominated, arose from its goodness, like the weeds which spring up in too rich and fertile a soil.

A minority of twelve years enabled Lord Argentyn, the guardian of Strathern, to invest a large sum in the funds from the yearly revenue of his ward, so that on attaining his twenty-first year our hero found himself master of an estate of fifteen thousand a year, and about two hundred thousand pounds in the funds. Lord Argentyn, in rendering up his trust, endeavoured to impress on the mind of his late ward the prudence of expending this large capital, or at least the greater portion of it, in the purchase of an estate which would increase his importance in the country, and bind him still more to its interests. Such was his influence over the mind of Strathern, that it is more than probable his counsel would have been adopted, had he lived long enough to enforce it; but, unhappily for his ward, three months after he had attained his majority, Lord Argentyn died suddenly of a complaint of the heart, which had baffled the skill of his physicians, lamented by all who knew him, and truly mourned by the young man to whom he had acted as a father. His large fortune, which was unentailed, he bequeathed to a relative, who inherited the title, with a reversion to Strathern, in case the said relative died without a son, a contingency not to be anticipated, as he was already the father of three healthy boys, and husband to a lady likely to bless him with more branches to the support of the family tree.

When Strathern looked around on the mansion, in which he had

passed so many happy days, and on the objects no less endeared to him by habit and association than by their intrinsic value—objects collected at an immense cost from the choicest galleries in Italy—he felt like a banished man, looking for the last time on his home, and the household gods that had endeared it to him. Gladly would he have invested a large portion of his funded property in the purchase of this house, and the glorious works of art that filled it; but unfortunately, as not only he, but the inheritor of it, considered, it was so strictly entailed, that neither the mansion nor any part of its treasures could be sold: and the present Lord Argentyn found himself the owner of statues and pictures, which, having no taste for them, he would gladly have exchanged for some of the thousands of Strathern.

So habituated had our hero become to the sight of works of art, that he had grown to think them absolutely necessary to his enjoyment. Walls without pictures by the best masters, and galleries without statues by the greatest sculptors, seemed to him to be not only unendurable, but a positive reproach to any one who possessed the means of procuring them; so he determined on first providing a house fit for the reception of such treasures, and then visiting Italy in search of them. No sooner was it known that the rich Mr. Strathern wished to purchase a mansion than innumerable ones were offered for his choice; but, accustomed to the spacious and lofty apartments of Argentyn House, with its princely library, picture, and statue gallery, he could find no dwelling to satisfy his taste, and eventually he determined on erecting one which should combine all that he required.

Behold him, then, ere yet he had numbered twenty-two years, and when most men of his time of life are occupied only in enjoying the present hour, embarked in an undertaking seldom contemplated before a man has reached a much more mature age. His college friends, who flocked around him in London as they had done at Christ Church, first endeavoured to reason him out of the folly, as they termed it, of plunging into brick and mortar, repeating to him the hackneyed proverb that "Fools build houses for wise men to live in;" and having failed to reason him out of his plan, then tried ridicule, that weapon so successful when aimed at the weak, but with no better result, for Strathern was firm. They could not conceive, and so they told him, what business he could have with a better house than any of the numerous ones, with bills posted in the windows, to be seen in all the fashionable squares, or

in Carlton-garden, or terrace: but Strathern was not a man likely to consult his associates in carrying out plans for his own individual comfort, nor to imagine that they could judge accurately of what was necessary to the gratification of his taste.

"There is a capital house to be let in Carlton Gardens," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, one of Strathern's *soi-disant* friends; "it belonged to poor Winstanley, who furnished it splendidly, as the auctioneers say. How many pleasant nights we had there! Poor Winstanley, what a pity that he ruined himself so soon!"

"Do you remember what delicious *petits soupers* he used to give after the opera?" observed Sir Henry Devereux. "There one was always certain to find the *élite* of the *corps de ballet*—pleasant creatures, and not *gênant*. Poor Winstanley! Never shall I forget when, waiting for him one day in what was called his library, the fancy came into my head to take down a book, when, judge my surprise, I discovered that what appeared to be a goodly array of richly bound volumes were only boards covered with leather, gilt and lettered to look like them, and which served as doors to *armoires*, which held his wardrobe. 'Books!' exclaimed poor Winstanley, when I told him my disappointment, 'what the deuce should I do with books! I, who seldom can find time to read a newspaper, or dip into the *Racing Calendar*.' I dare say these very same *armoires* are still in the house, with half a hundred capital inventions of poor Win's, who, to do him justice, really understood comfort. You cannot do better, Strathern, than secure that house, and revive the *petits soupers*."

"I should not like the associations such a dwelling would call up," replied Strathern. "*Petits soupers* with the *élite* of the *corps de ballet*—those pleasant creatures, *sans gêne*—are not at all to my taste. Such company is, in my opinion, much more suited to old and *blasé* voluptuaries, no longer capable of appreciating the charm of good female society, than to young men not yet palled with less censurable pleasures, or demoralized by their abuse."

"It is *très-mauvais genre*, also," observed Lord Hazleden, "and only adopted by men proverbial for *mauvais ton* and uncultivated minds, who, conscious of their own unworthiness to seek the society of refined women or to conciliate their good opinion, are content to mix with those of the fair sex who are as ignorant as themselves, and with whom there is no *gêne*."

"But what think you of men who, not content with engaging

the women of the *corps de ballet* to their parties, invite also the men?"

"*Est-il possible? 'O tempora, o mores!'* Can such things be?"

"What a prudish fellow you are, Hazleden!" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "you will make Strathern as squamish as yourself. But, *n'importe*, every man to his fancy, as the old adage says. You must however, admit that Carlton Gardens and Terrace are good situations—near the theatres, the opera, the clubs."

"They may be so for those who rely on such places for amusement, and who wish to spare their carriage-horses at night. But I confess that I like only mansions *entre cour et jardin*, as at Paris, and not houses all in a row, with their exteriors so exactly similar that one of the owners may be puzzled to decide whether he is knocking at his own door or at that of his neighbour, Mr. Tomkins. Then I dislike the sound of the rumbling of omnibuses and stage-coaches from Pall Mall, and the sight of flowers and plants begrimed with soot and smoke in the gardens which front the said houses. I also dislike being awoke at early morn by the lowing of the cows while being milked, the cries of the unhealthy, town-pent children, sent to partake their produce, the loud voices of their gossiping nurse-maids, and the still louder objurgations of the keepers of the said cows. Then look at the moving scene, daily, hourly presented, from the windows of these houses. Can any thing be less agreeable? Crowds of pedestrians always of the lowest description; dirty children, with slip-shod maidens, more occupied in flirtations with soldiers or servants out of place, than in looking after the poor little creatures committed to their charge; broken-down tradesmen and suspicious-looking individuals, on whom the police keep a sharp look-out, bestride the benches, ruminating on their cares, or spelling over some one of the vile papers which inculcate vengeance for them. Add to the pleasure of all this the never-ceasing effluvia of bad tobacco with which the atmosphere is impregnated, and you must admit that the situation you have recommended is any thing but agreeable. I have omitted noticing among the advantage of houses in a row, hearing the young ladies of your neighbours practising the harp and pianoforte, and squalling under the tuition of a singing master, until you are almost tempted to wish that music was an unknown science. Oh, no! defend me from inhabiting one of these houses, in which handsome furniture looks as much out of its element as in a watering-place."

It was some time ere Strathern found a site which he deemed

worthy of erecting a mansion on. Pleasure grounds and a garden he considered to be indispensable adjuncts to his dwelling, and it was no easy task to find space for these in a metropolis so densely populated as London. At length he discovered and became the purchaser of ten or twelve acres of land near Knightsbridge, still possessing many fine old trees, the remains of former park grounds, ere London had gone out of town, and when what has now almost ceased to be suburbs, owing to the extension of new terraces, squares, and crescents, was occupied by stately and cumbrous mansions, standing in their own well-timbered lawns, and surrounded by thick shrubberies. He next consulted one of the best architects of the day, and, having explained his wishes to him, arranged for their being carried into execution. There was only one thing left unsettled; and that was precisely what older and wiser persons would have thought most important, namely, the sum to be expended. While dwelling on the necessity of spacious drawing-rooms, noble library, picture and statue-galleries, summer and winter *salles à manger*, lofty conservatories, *salles de bal*, etc., with a stately peristyle, which should give grandeur to the house and afford shelter to its visiters, and a vestibule, in which even the most dainty dame might pause to admire its proportions while uncloaking, without a risk of cold or discomfort, Strathern omitted to demand what the probable expense of such a building might be, and the still more prudent plan of contracting for it never entered his head. The architect saw that he had an unwary and liberal employer to deal with; and so few of this description are now to be met, that he determined to profit by the chance thrown in his way. An elevation and ground-plan were speedily submitted for Strathern's approval; every possible expedition in the erection and completion was promised, and, *en attendant*, our hero determined to pass a year or two on the Continent while his future abode was building.

Before the commencement of autumn, the period he had fixed for his departure, he found himself, without an effort on his part, thrown into the vortex of fashionable life — that vortex, which, once entered, it is so difficult to escape from. Invitations poured in on him daily for *déjeuners dansants*, dinners, balls, concerts, and parties, in such profusion, that to attend even half the number would have been a fatiguing operation; and those he did go to so exactly resembled each other, that one might have served as a specimen of all. There might be seen the same kind of decorations,

the same style of houses, the same crowd of faces, wearing the same expression of *ennui*, and the same viands and refreshments. It struck him with surprise, as it has done many others new to London fashionable life, that such numbers could be drawn together night after night to share in the same inane round of amusements, which each individual of the circle declared to be tiresome and *ennuyeux*. The guests invited to these *fêtes* were always thrice more than the houses could contain, the consequences of which were that the crowd and heat were intolerable, and the mingled odours of flowers and perfumed handkerchiefs, with other less agreeable ones, insupportable. The result of all this was, that ladies, however cold on other occasions, were on these in the melting mood—at least if their flushed cheeks and humid foreheads might be received as evidence. The old looked as if escaped from a vapour-bath, their bright-coloured turbans and toques offering a striking contrast to the faces they were meant to adorn; the middle-aged appeared ten years older, and the young and fair faded, as delicate exotic plants when removed from a hothouse into a less genial air. Then, to arrive at these "splendid *fêtes*," as the newspapers termed them, was a service of danger; for in the street or square in which they were given so many vehicles got blocked in together, that, in spite of the utmost efforts of the police to preserve order, many were the ladies who, arrayed in their brilliant dresses and sparkling in diamonds, had to sit in their carriages for hours, compelled to listen to the blasphemy and vituperation of contending coachmen, the threats and entreaties of the police, mingled with the prancing of horses and the occasional crashing of panels. At the balls there was never half sufficient space for dancing, while the intense heat and oppression of the atmosphere rendered that exercise rather a painful exertion than an agreeable recreation. The parties where no dancing took place were equally numerously attended, and what the object of thus congregating could be, Strathern could not discover. It evidently was not conversation, for "How hot it is!" "What a dreadful crowd?" "And how I wish I could get away!" were the words he heard continually uttered around. The giving concerts seemed to him still more incomprehensible. Why persons should pay large sums to celebrated singers to go through the same music to which all present had repeatedly listened at the Opera, where the *mise en scène* added attraction to it, and where it was so infinitely better performed, did surprise him—and the more so, when he noticed how few could distinctly hear the sweet sounds, owing to

the only half-suppressed conversations carrying on in various parts of the apartment, and how still fewer cared about the music, as was evidenced by the wearied countenances of some and the whispering of others. The never-ending dinners he found equally irksome. Tables covered with massive plate, the same gilded *plateaux* and *épergnes* filled with flowers, the same gilded ice-pails and candelabra, the same routine of soups and fishes replaced by French *relevés* and *entrées*, the same *hors-d'œuvre* and the *buffet* charged with similar *pièces de résistance*, the same third course of *gibier*, *entremêts*, *sucreries*, etc., followed by the usual abundance of hot-house fruit, might be found at every dinner. The same guests, too, might generally be seen; the same low-toned, gentle, inane attempts at conversation were carried on; the same number of servants out of liveries and in richly-laced ones, with imperturbable countenances, glided noiselessly around the table; and the same expression of weariness and *ennui* sate on the countenances of the host, hostess, and guests.

"And this is called society!" said Strathern to himself. "Better, far better, would solitude be, where, freed from the puerile shackles imposed by this heartless and artificial mode of life, one could indulge the love of rural scenery, and hold communion with those choice spirits whose lucubrations, too seldom resorted to, fill the shelves of our libraries."

In the circles in which Strathern found himself, he observed with surprise that the most perfect equality reigned between the *spirituel* and the dull, the wise and the foolish, at least as far as conversation went. The same conventional tone of reserve and inanity was preserved, and any deviation from it was considered a violation of the good breeding which persons of fashion consider to consist in a chilliness of manner and a polished style of expression, in uttering in a low voice insipid comments on the news of the day, the places of public amusement, *la pluie ou le beau temps*. Clever men and women seemed afraid to elevate their voices, or at least to give vent to their thoughts, lest they should pass the frozen limit, the *cordon sanitaire*, established by the despot fashion to confine all within its circle; and the dull and foolish, forming the majority in all societies, were pleased to see the clever and witty reduced to the same level as themselves. Strathern was sometimes amused by observing when a foreigner of distinction broke the uniformity of these stupid dinners, by introducing, in his natural tone of voice, the topics which furnish general conversation on the Continent, the

alarm expressed in the countenances of the host, hostess, and their other visiters. They looked on the stranger almost as a barbarian; and while he, wishing to dispel the dulness around him, courageously, though not with so heroic a motive, like another Quintus Curtius, threw himself into the gulph of silence, they, shocked and disgusted at what they termed his *manque de bienséance*, looked at each other in horror, and inwardly rejoiced that *they* were not like him. Strathern was often reminded at these luxurious dinners of the Frenchman's remark, that "*Les Anglais ont un grand talent pour le silence*;" while, perfectly aware that many were those among the party who could talk well on all subjects, yet such was the tyranny of custom established by fashion, that few dared to break through its boundaries. This macadamizing of manners, if not of minds, had a most petrifying effect on society. It checked the brilliant sally, the playful repartee, and the piquant anecdotes, which give it a zest and a charm, and threw a gloom over it, unknown in the social circles in other lands, where each individual endeavours to contribute to the agreeability of the party in which he finds himself. To Lord Wyndermere alone did Strathern disclose the *ennui* he experienced at the *fêtes* where he was so often a guest.

"I, too, have felt all that you describe," said that nobleman; "but beware, my dear friend, how you reveal it. A freemason, who betrayed the mysteries of his craft, would be less severely treated than he who confesses the overpowering dulness of London fashionable society, and which constitutes its chief characteristic. If each of its members were as frank as you are, who would wish to enter its pale? and the desire to enter, and the difficulties opposed by those who wish to enhance the imaginary favour of opening its portals, would be at an end. We all, who are initiated, know that we are filled by *ennui* at the parties we frequent, but we keep the secret for the pleasure—a spiteful one, I own—of seeing others anxious to become sharers of our supposed enjoyments. What but the sense of being possessed by this demon fills our clubs, and has given rise to the filthy and unbearable habit of smoking? a habit which so unblushingly betrays a disregard to the comfort of women, by infecting them with the odour with which our clothes are impregnated."

"How ladies can submit to receive into their society men, who, by this filthy and disgusting habit, render themselves totally unfit for it, has ever been to me a matter of utter surprise, and I confess

that in my opinion there never was a condescension on their part more ill-judged. We soon learn to undervalue those who do not make us feel that they respect themselves; and, when women betray such a desire for our society as to be content to receive us, breathing, not of Araby the blest, but of cigars, we may prove ungrateful enough to think that we cannot be done without, and so dictate laws to those who ought to frame them for us. For myself, I feel ashamed for my sex, when I see men approaching ladies in *soirées* and balls, their clothes sending forth an odour that but too plainly discloses how recently they had been indulging in the abomination of smoking; and yet these delicate creatures, ready to

"die of a rose in aromatic pain,"

evince no symptom, whatever they may feel, of the disgust which so vile an effluvium is calculated to excite."

"As long as women are taught to think that to form a good marriage is the end and aim of their lives, they will, to accomplish this object, consent to tolerate habits in men from which they naturally recoil in disgust, and will carefully conceal their distaste, lest it should militate against the sole project they have in view—a good settlement for life."

"Poor girls! they are much more to be pitied than blamed. This husband-hunting system is the result of the unequal distribution of fortune in the families of the rich and noble in England. Young women with us, of high birth, and nurtured in luxury, are so scantily portioned, that, should they not succeed in forming eligible marriages, no resource awaits them but to wed some *parvenu*, with no other recommendation than his wealth, or to wear out their lives as dependants in the establishments of their elder brothers or married sisters, where they are not always certain to be treated with that kindness to which their helpless position has so strong a claim. The wife of the lordly brother is seldom found to be amicably disposed towards his dependant sisters; nor is the husband of a sister, in general, more partial to their becoming fixtures in his house. What, then, can be more dreaded by young women than the chance of such a fate as I have described? and, actuated by the fear of it, can it be wondered at that they submit to many innovations in *les bienséances* on the part of men, which, under other circumstances, they would never tolerate?"

"I agree with you most fully, and heartily wish that a provision sufficiently large to support unmarried women in comfort and inde-

pendence should be secured by fathers to their daughters, though at the risk of leaving the heir presumptive a few thousands a-year less."

"Were this plan adopted, women would resume the natural good taste and decent dignity which their dependant position so often compels them to abdicate, and men would be obliged to observe that respectful deference towards them to which they are entitled."

"This would be, indeed, a most desirable change, and one devoutly to be wished for; but, with estates so strictly entailed on eldest sons, as English ones generally are, and with provisions so limited for younger children, I fear there is little chance of its adoption, unless fathers and mothers show more inclination than the greater part of them are at present disposed to do to retrench their heavy expenditures, in order to lay by from their incomes wherewithal to add to the too scanty portions allotted to their daughters."

"And this, I fear, they are too selfish to do, even if they had the power; for the luxurious habits, overgrown establishments, and carelessness in checking the impositions practised on them, so characteristic of the aristocracy of our time, have involved the greater number of them in pecuniary difficulties which leave them only barely sufficient, if even that, to meet the yearly demands on their often anticipated resources."

"It is, in truth, a sad state of things, and leaves one little hope of seeing women placed in a state of competence that would save them from the humiliating necessity of husband-hunting, with all the mortifications inseparable from such a pursuit. I love to see that greatly vilified and much-enduring class of spinsters denominated old maids blessed with the means of securing a home, however modest a one it may be, for their old age, instead of living in dependance on a brother or married sister, performing many of the duties of a menial without receiving wages or thanks. See these poor women, after a youth passed in the splendid residences of their parents and in a round of gaiety, having failed to secure husbands, and their good looks faded, 'left to wither on the virgin stem,' with a stipend wholly inadequate to provide any of the comforts of life, deemed incumbrances by those on whom they depend, and painfully awake to the disagreeableness of their position; the gravity and pensiveness it is so well calculated to awaken draws on them the imputation of being 'ill-humoured old maids,' 'tiresome old spinsters,' and all the various other offensive epithets ap-

plied by the unthinking and unfeeling to those whom they ought to commiserate rather than deride."

"Yes, there are few classes more deserving esteem than that denominated old maids. What kind and tender nurses to the sick, what affectionate and sympathising companions to the sorrowful, do the maiden aunts to be found in families make! They are the never-failing resource of all who require their aid, and the providence of nephews and nieces, down to the second and third generation, in all the tribulations peculiar to the imprudence of youth. They are the conscientious guardians to whom orphan girls can be confided by dying mothers, whose last hours are soothed by the certainty of how faithfully their injunctions will be fulfilled. They are the sedate chaperons to supply a mother's place, when pleasure or business call that parent from her daughters; in short, they are, in my opinion, a comfort in every family, and should be treated with marked distinction."

"We are not deficient in humanity, Heaven knows, in England; we have asylums and funds to meet many cases of distress and hardship. Why should we not subscribe a sum, to be disposed of in adding, according as the case may require it, to the narrow incomes of unmarried women, such as we have described, the fund to be vested in proper hands, and the yearly stipend to be paid without subjecting those who require it to the painful necessity of an application from which their delicacy and pride would revolt?"

"An excellent notion, I declare, and one to which I will readily give my support to carry into effect."

"We will prove that, though the age of chivalry is gone by, and that men no longer go about proclaiming the superiority of the ladies of their love, and offering, for their dear sakes, to redress the wrongs of the fair sex, we are ready to provide for the comfort of a portion of them peculiarly entitled to our respect, and for doing which no selfish motive can be attributed to us."

## CHAPTER III.

In foreign lands 'tis wise that man should roam,
That he may learn to prize the more his home,
And conquer prejudice, besetting sin
Of those content to live for aye pent in
Their native land, by reading only taught
To know the marvels master-minds have wrought,
Or judge of other men, their morals, laws,
And customs, tracing still effect from cause.

The London season closed, Strathern went to Paris, where he entered into the same round of gaieties which tempt those who visit it for the first time; but they soon palled on his taste, and he left without regret the gay capital, for the south of France and Italy, where he expected and found more to excite his interest and occupy his mind. At Rome, where amongst the English an exaggerated report of his wealth had preceded him, Strathern found himself an object of peculiar interest to mothers and aunts with marriageable daughters and nieces. Nor, sooth to say, did these young ladies themselves betray any symptoms of disinclination to cultivate an acquaintance with a young and very good-looking man, who, even without one quarter of the fortune attributed to him, they would have thought, if not a desirable partner for life, at least a very agreeable one for a ball. His love of the fine arts, and the patronage he bestowed on them, being known, it became the fashion for his fair countrywomen to frequent the studios where orders were executing for Strathern, whose taste was extolled, and whose liberality was the theme of every tongue. Albums were shown to him and sketches exhibited by lovely amateurs, who partook, or asserted they did, his enthusiasm for art; and the sympathy with his tastes which he met in nearly all the young ladies of his acquaintance, and the reality of which he never questioned, contributed to render their society peculiarly pleasant. He rode, walked, or danced with them all by turn; but, though he rendered justice to their attractions, he felt no disposition to appropriate any of these fair and amiable creatures, and no one among them had any cause for jealousy of her contemporaries for any partiality on his part.

"You are a happy man, Strathern," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who had lately arrived at Rome, as they strolled on the *Monte Pincio* together; "you have all the pretty girls here setting their caps at you, and all their mammas acting the civil. Such are the advantages of a large fortune; while a poor younger brother like me is only noticed by the daughter of some citizen 'of credit and renown,' who is tickled by the empty title attached to my name, or some girl of our own set, for the nonce in want of a partner to dance with."

"And you call me a happy man, because, in the belief that I am rich, these young ladies distinguish me with their smiles! How can you suppose that such distinction can have the least value for me? I hope I am not a vain man; nevertheless, I acknowledge that I can never find pleasure in any preference accorded to me in right of my fortune, and that even the fairest and most captivating woman would find no favour in my eyes, or susceptible place in my heart, if I believed her to be influenced by mercenary motives."

"But how, with your wealth, can you ever be assured that the woman you select for your wife is not influenced by such motives?"

"Really, Beaulieu, you seem determined to humiliate me. Am I, then, so ill-looking and stupid that I may not look forward to that which all men hope to find, namely, some one woman who will like me for myself, and not for my fortune?"

"My dear fellow, no one thinks more highly of your various *agréments*, bodily and mental, than I do; but what I meant is, that you rich men, who possess so many and such *sterling* advantages over us poor ones, have left us one which should console us, and that is the certainty that, when we are preferred, we owe it wholly to self, and not to the adventitious aid of gold."

"Yet you called me a happy man a few minutes ago! Why, the very belief you have endeavoured to inculcate would render me quite the reverse, by making me a misanthrope."

"Hah, hah, hah! A misanthrope, my dear Strathern—*you* a misanthrope! The very notion sets me laughing. There is no dread of that while you have as many thousands a-year as you are said to possess, even if you had not the personal and mental qualifications which no one can deny you."

"You seem to be disposed to make the *amende honorable*, Beaulieu, for your previously expressed doubts of men of fortune having

any chance of being wedded for their personal merits, by complimenting me on mine."

"You know, or ought to know, Strathern, that I never pay compliments, not even to those who most exact such salves to their wounded vanity—women who *have been*, but no longer are, beauties, and rich old female relatives, with hoarded wealth to leave behind them to whoever can most skilfully administer the gentle doses of flattery, so essential to soothe the irritation produced by age and its infirmities."

"I was not aware of your stubborn virtue on this point, I confess, Beaulieu," Said Strathern, smiling, "but I shall henceforth note it carefully down in the catalogue of your commendable qualities. But to resume : so you think rich men cannot become misanthropes?"

"Such, certainly, is my opinion, and it is founded on the impossibility of their ever seeing the world in its true unvarnished colours. Every object is beheld by them through the medium of their own prosperity. They know nothing of the contumely that awaits on poverty, and the different aspects assumed towards those not gifted with the goods of fortune, and to the wealthy. Look, for example, on the different reception given in society to an elder or younger brother of a noble family. The heir presumptive is courted and caressed on every side. He is invited everywhere; mothers and daughters smile at his approach, and fathers promise him the shooting of their best preserves—while his brothers are, poor devils! left on the *pavé* of London nine months of the year, to dine at their clubs, and are expected to be grateful if asked now and then to a country-house, where they are merely tolerated, and not even that if they presume to pay attention to any of the young unmarried ladies, for whom mammas have always higher views."

"But do you think that rich men are exempted from seeing much of the baseness of mankind, though preserved from the slights and insolence which you say await younger brothers? Can they, unless more short-sighted than men of common sense in society generally are, be ignorant of the interested and selfish motives of many of those who flock around them with professions of friendship, and the hollowness of the smiles that welcome their presence?"

"*Peut-être* they are not, but their knowledge of all this cannot bring the painful and humiliating feelings experienced by the well-born and poor, under the annoyances to which *they* are exposed.

A rich man can smile with self-complacency when he detects the selfish motives which actuate those who flatter and fawn on him, while *he* who, because he is known not to be rich, instead of adulation and attention, meets only neglect or rudeness, is stung into anger by the omission of those marks of courtesy at which the wealthy smile."

A few days after this conversation, Strathern observed a striking change in the manner of the youthful portion of his fair countrywomen at Rome. Each, when an opportunity offered, spoke of the pleasure of retirement as far superior to the frivolous gaiety and feverish excitement of a town life, and dwelt on the advantages of competency over great possessions, which, if they furnished means for splendour, entailed, also, cares and duties from which those with humbler fortunes were exempt; in short, "a change had come o'er the spirit of their dreams," and those who had not previously known them might have been led to imagine that not only were their desires for the gauds of fortune most moderate, but that they had a positive objection to aught above a moderate competency. This sudden change had been effected by Lord Alexander Beaulieu having disclosed to them the substance of Strathern's conversation with him. Like most reported conversations, it had lost nothing in the repetition, for that young scion of nobility, who was by no means so remarkable for a strict adherence to truth as for garrulity, had told them that his friend Strathern was so vain a man that he had determined never to marry unless he could find a woman whose contempt of riches would offer a guarantee of his being preferred for himself alone, and not for his worldly goods and possessions.

Strathern smiled at the assumed disinterestedness of his fair young countrywomen, which, however, produced no effect on his stubborn heart. Nevertheless, the insight which it gave him of the artifices to which the high-born can condescend, in order to forward any scheme they may form, made a deep impression on his mind, and opened it to the first assault that suspicion—that unworthy sentiment, to be deprecated even in the old, but so detestable in the young—had succeeded in making on it. Had Strathern any of the vanity of which his *soi-disant* friend, Lord Alexander Beaulieu, accused him, he would have been less prone to question the motives of the attentions which were so liberally showered on him; but his exemption from this natural weakness exposed him to the greater evil, suspicion, as the absence of a harmless flower may sometimes be filled up by a noxious weed. A casuist might inquire

whether the vanity so generally implanted in the human breast may not be intended for some good purpose, and only tend to render its possessor ridiculous when not kept in due bounds. How many great, how many good actions have been achieved by this passion, from the days of Alexander the Great down to our own! To gratify it, how many thousands and tens of thousands have been expended, furnishing employment for millions! How many charity lists has it filled up—how many benefactions bestowed! What like vanity renders us content with ourselves, and, consequently, disposed to be content with others? It is a philanthropic passion, disposing us to good and liberal deeds, and merits more than half the encomiums unjustly bestowed on generosity. In short, I should say.

> "The man who has not vanity (not music) in his soul
> Is fit for treason, stratagem, and spoil;"

for he is a discontented man, and out of such are dark misanthropes made.

Well pleased was Strathern to wander from gallery to gallery at Rome, summing himself from the glowing walls filled with the works of the great masters. What trains of thought were engendered by these *chefs-d'œuvre*, painted by hands long mouldered in the grave, and conceived by heads into which the Almighty had infused a spark of his own divine power—that of creating! When his mind was imbued, and his heart warmed by these glorious works, he pined for companionship with some one of kindred taste, to whom he could impart the feelings they awakened, and who would share without a sneer his enthusiastic admiration. Often did his memory revert to his departed friend Lord Argentyn, who, like him, had often loitered in the haunts in which he now passed most of his hours, and who had first taught him to appreciate art. No such companionship, however, was then to be found at Rome, which, though filled with crowds of his countrymen and women, in search of the Proteus, pleasure, among many of whom pretenders to taste and connoisseurship were not rare, few, if any, really understood the merits of the pictures and statues they professed to admire, and some unconscious *bêtes* frequently exposed not only their ignorance, but the hollowness of the spurious enthusiasm they affected. It is more easy to prate about art than to comprehend it, and many were those who believed they were profoundly versed in its mysteries, while acting more as appraisers than real admirers of its treasures. Some of these would-be connoisseurs would prose for

hours, not on the relative merit, but the comparative value of pictures, a tact which they had acquired by listening to the opinions of acknowledged judges, and by adding them up as a salesman does a bill, until they had produced a specified valuation, when, vain of this imagined knowledge in an art, the very rudiments of which they had neither acquired nor could reason on, they moved pompously about from gallery to gallery, passing off their pretended *savoir en vertu* on those too ignorant to detect its fallacy. Often did these sapient gentlemen, who beset the Roman palaces, with spectacles on nose or glass in hand, offer their services to enlighten Strathern, by pointing out, not the pictures most worthy of admiration, but those most likely to fetch a large price, if, as they termed it, brought into the market—always bearing in mind the *English*, and not the continental mart. He would turn from them with a sentiment akin to indignation when a Ruysdael, with its cold gray sky, gloomy trees, and ruined mill, was by them pronounced to be more valuable than a Raphael or a Francesco Francia, a Cuyp than an Andrea del Sarto, and a Wouvermans, with his never-failing white horse, to a Domenichino, merely because the Dutch school is preferred by the great mass of English buyers, a preference that argues little for their taste. But, while visiting and studying the works of the old masters in painting and sculpture, Strathern neglected not those of the modern, nor, above all, those of his countrymen, and glad and proud was he to find that he could conscientiously award them the palm of excellence. He commanded groups from Gibson, Westmacott, and Wyatt, and pictures from Williams; and the *partage* of a heritage between many branches of the family of a lately-deceased Roman prince having occasioned a sale—a rare event in a country where collections are scarcely ever broken up or sold—he purchased some of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Italian art, for the possession of which he had longed, but doubted the possibility of obtaining. Luckily for him, the coffers of his Holiness the Pope happened at that epoch to be unusually empty, which precluded his putting an embargo on the treasures so jealously watched over by the Pontiffs, by paying the value to the inheritor, and transferring them to the Vatican.

"Have you seen the new English beauty just arrived?" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu to Strathern, as they met one day at the Vatican. "By Jove, she is perfection! Such a complexion! After all, there is nothing to be compared with the lilies and roses of England. The pale olive of Italian beauties, and somewhat opaque

hues of the French, look to great disadvantage near them. But is not that our old college chum, Fitzwarren? Yes, positively it is; and here he comes."

"Hallo, my hearties, well met! Only came last night. Heard you were here—went off in search of you; was told I should probably find you at the Vatican, so here I am;" and Lord Fitzwarren shook his two friends by the hands, with a warmth and good will that testified his satisfaction at their meeting. Of the middle size, with a fat jolly face, and of considerable *embonpoint*, Lord Fitzwarren was the picture of good humour. His hair, and he had an immense quantity, was scarcely a shade darker than his very fair complexion, and, much addicted to smile at the jokes of others, and still more at his own, he was continually exposing a set of teeth so peculiarly fine as to incur the belief in those who knew him not, that it was to display them that he was always laughing.

"Who would have dreamt of seeing you here?" observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "I really could hardly believe my eyes when I first saw you enter."

"Why, to say the truth, I can scarcely believe that I am indeed at Rome, for you know I never cared any more about its ruins, pictures, and statues than about its ancient history, which, for the life of me, I never could take any interest in. Not like you, Strathern, who were always a bookworm; but, the fact is, London had got dull and empty. My favourite hunter, Nimrod—you remember Nimrod—one of the best jumpers that ever cleared a fence, had thrown out a spavin; my stupid groom mismanaged the case, and the veterinary surgeon was called in too late. It enrages one to think of it—I lost the poor animal; never shall I find such another. Gave eight hundred for him to Evandale, who could not ride him, and I would not have parted with him for thrice that sum. Sold off my stud in a pet, for doing which half England pronounced me to be ruined. Rather hard that one cannot sell one's horses in order to buy better next year, or part with one's yacht to build a larger, but that one is immediately declared to be cleaned out. But if one determines to go abroad for a few months, then the outcry becomes general, and every tradesman to whom you may happen to owe a guinea takes alarm and duns you. You pay them, but that does not silence the report: they assert that you must be ruined, because, unless you were, you could not prefer a clear sky and good climate to our cloudy one and eight months' winter fogs. Devilish provoking, let me tell you, to be compelled to keep up the

same pursuits and the same expenditure when you are tired of the first, and are grown too prudent to throw away your money on things that no longer please you. Yet this you must do in England, or pass for being hard up, as they call it, or quite dished, and so be avoided by your acquaintance in general, and your *friends* in *particular,* from the dread of your requiring their assistance."

Strathern and Lord Alexander Beaulieu could not resist smiling at the unusually angry expression of Lord Fitzwarren's countenance, while they acknowledged that there was but too much truth in what he said.

"You may laugh, my good fellows," exclaimed he, "but I can tell you that, while you are both amusing yourselves, very much to your satisfaction, I dare say, here, half England is either censuring or deploring the embarrassments which are supposed to have driven you to this fair and pleasant clime. People wonder how *you*, especially, Strathern, who came into forty thousand a year, and three hundred thousand pounds in the funds—for the world gives you credit for inheriting no less—not above a year ago, could have managed to get embarrassed in so short a time. In proportion to the wealth you were supposed to possess is the severity of the censure on such a spendthrift as you are accused of being. Some declare you to be a professed gambler, though your friends know you never played; while others, ignorant of your father having died when you were a child, insist that you had ruined yourself by post-obits while in your minority. Beaulieu comes off better: they say that as he, being a younger brother, had not much to lose, he consequently is not so blameable. The outcry about you, however, is forgotten in my imagined delinquency—yes, delinquency; for is not poverty in England considered to be nothing short of crime?—and, not to my knowledge owing at this moment a guinea at home, I am set down as one of 'them there *harrystockracy*,' as the lower orders designate us, who pay no one, and, when they have spent all, and more than they ever had, run away to the continent, and leave poor tradespeople to suffer for having trusted them."

"We must, nevertheless, my dear friend, acknowledge," replied Strathern, "that the sweeping censure and unjust suspicions indulged by the lower classes against 'our order' have had their origin in the reckless extravagance of some of its members, entailing, among other evils, the want of power to fulfil engagements thought-

lessly incurred, and by which tradespeople are often greatly injured, and sometimes wholly ruined."

"Pshaw! don't waste your pity on them, my dear fellow: a pack of bloodsuckers who fatten on us Can you drive out anywhere, within fifty miles of the metropolis, without seeing villas—ay, and mansions, too—the trimness and order of which attract your notice, and induce you to inquire the names of their owners, without discovering them to be the cormorants who have been preying on you in the shape of jewellers, mercers, tailors, hatters, and *id genus omne*, the produce of whose impositions is staring you in the face, in the shape of velvet lawns, green verandaed houses, and picturesque cottages, embosomed in umbrageous shades, as George Robins would say?"

"Indeed, my dear Fitzwarren, you are unjust to the class you describe. I have known many persons of strict probity and honourable sentiments among them."

"Have you, by Jove! Then you have been more fortunate than I have."

"For me, I coincide with Fitzwarren, and *odi profanum vulgus, et arceo*," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu with a disdainful air.

"Has it never occurred to you that the want of punctuality in the payments of those denominated men of fashion has led to the overcharges and imposition of which you complain?" asked Strathern.

"Who the deuce need take care, or indeed can afford to be punctual, when charged half as much again as an article is worth?"

"It is precisely because a tradesman cannot calculate when he is likely to receive the value of the goods he sells, and for which he must pay within a given time, that he is compelled to charge a larger price than if he obtained immediate payment, or even at the end of a year's credit," observed Strathern.

"But if you admit, and you cannot do otherwise, that they commence with charging more than the value, what can you say for their demanding interest after the first year for articles already over-priced, on the consideration of anticipated want of punctuality?"

"I say that perhaps even then they ultimately do not profit as much as if they sold their goods at a less price, for ready money," replied Strathern.

"By Jove, you are a regular advocate for the shopocracy!" said

Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "and, if I did not know that no *mésalliance* had ever caused the noble blood of the Stratherns to mingle with that of a *parvenu*, I should have suspected that some one of your grandmothers had belonged to the race you so warmly defend."

"Who but Englishmen would pause in such a place," observed Strathern, "to talk of the subject that has just occupied us?—and Fitzwarren, too, who has never been in the Vatican before! Look how the strangers stare at us in astonishment: why, the very *custodii* are smiling at our barbarism!"

"And what care I?" said Fitzwarren. "I much prefer a little rational talk to gazing at statues, the merits of which I don't understand, or gaping up at painted ceilings until I get a stiff neck and a fit of yawning. I have had enough of that work at Florence, where I was bored to death by a stupid fellow of a *laquais de place*, who would insist on taking me to see every gallery in the place, until I wished him and them at the bottom of the sea. Why, this morning when I got up, a Roman fellow, calling himself a *cicerone*, offered to take me a *Giro*. 'You and your *Giro* be hanged,' said I: 'take me to the lodging of my friends:' which he did, turning up his eyes like a duck in thunder at my refusal to stop and examine any of the objects he pointed out."

"Then, *au nom du ciel*," exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu," what induced you to come to Rome?"

"A temptation which would induce me to go to the North Pole, if required—a girl, and the very handsomest, too, I ever set my eyes on. A magnificent creature: large in the forehand; capital shoulder; fine in the legs; neat in the pasterns; sound in the feet; and with such a coat—skin, I mean—as I never before saw. Met her at the English minister's at Florence, at dinner: good fellow that, and gives a capital feed—devilish civil to me. Saw her next evening at Normanby's theatre: devilish fine acting, I assure you, and *he* a first-rate performer; keeps a capital house, and enables one to judge of the merits of his cook by inviting one to dinner frequently. She—the girl, I mean—did not act: all the better. I hate having girls going through love-scenes on the stage; it begets too much familiarity. Wouldn't like to marry a girl who had been playing Juliet to any Romeo but myself; and hang me if I think, even to please the girl of my heart, I could act that love-sick, melancholy swain;" and Fitzwarren burst out into a loud laugh, that attracted the eyes of those near enough to hear it, as the comical

notion of his enacting the part of Romeo crossed his mind. "Well," resumed he, "having been regularly presented to her, I thought myself entitled to converse with her when we met. She is as shy as my old mare Fanny—you remember Fanny, don't you? A capital mare I had from Jersey; thorough-bred and fine action. Ah! that *was* an animal."

"The lady, or the mare?" asked Lord Alexander Beaulieu, laughing.

"What a fellow you are, Beaulieu!—the mare, to be sure. I found the girl so shy and distant that I could hardly get a word from her. Strange, wasn't it? for you know that in London the girls and their mothers, too, are monstrous civil to me; too civil by half, I think sometimes, when they are at Epsom or Ascot, in the stand, and prevent one from making one's bets, or hedging, they are so chatty and so anxious about one's horse winning. Finding she was so reserved, I tried to amuse her by telling her the London news of the last season, with some of our good stories; but—would you believe it?—she never vouchsafed to smile, though you remember how Lady Agnes Mildenard, Lady Sophy Aldenham, and Lady Maria Fordingbridge, used to laugh when I told them. Being determined to conquer her shyness, I went on and mentioned how I disliked seeing sights, gaping at statues and pictures, and looking at churches and ruins; and then I saw her smile; and, by Jove! most beautiful she looked at the moment, showing teeth like pearls; but there was something sly and wicked about her eye, as it fell on me, that made me think she was laughing at me, though I don't know why. I intended to propose for her in the course of a few days, feeling quite certain that I should never find a girl so much to my taste; but judge of my surprise when I discovered, two days after, that she had accompanied her mother to Rome; so off I came in search of her."

"And so, Fizwarren, you really are in love at last?" said Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "I thought that only by a paracentesis was your heart to be reached."

"This fair creature has found the way to it, I can tell you," replied Lord Fitzwarren, heaving the first sigh that had ever been heard to come from his broad, fat chest; and so comically did his plump, rosy face look with the grave expression which for a moment it assumed, that both his companions could not resist laughing.

"You may laugh, but I am caught at last," said Fitzwarren: "and

without her so much as saying a civil thing to me, or even smiling at one of my jokes. Isn't it strange? Hang me, if I know how she managed it!"

"Tell us the name of this reserved, if not scornful beauty; there is something peculiarly piquant, I suppose, from the novelty, in finding a woman who takes no pains to attract, and uses no endeavour to retain an admirer. I long to become acquainted with this *rara avis*," observed Strathern.

"For the purpose of cutting me out, I suppose. No, by Jove! you would be too formidable a rival in my way, so I will not present you."

"I will save you that trouble," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "for I have not only divined the name of the lady of your love, but I have had the happiness of being made known to her."

"The devil you have! why, she has been but two days at Rome. But you are only trying to get at her name. I see it all. You don't know her."

"You will perhaps credit my assertion when I mention the name, which is no other than Miss Sydney, the daughter and heiress of the late Ferdinand Sydney, Esq., of Sydney Court, in Yorkshire."

"That is the name, I admit. But see, Strathern, what a fellow Beaulieu is. He has already found out that she is an heiress, while I was wholly ignorant, and perfectly careless of the matter. I really believe that if Venus herself could appear before him, he would inquire what is her 'fortune and expectations?' As you know so much about her, probably you are acquainted with her abode?"

"Perfectly. She is at Serny's, in the Piazza d'Espagna."

"Then I'll be off, to pay my visit there:" and, rapidly turning from his companions, Lord Fitzwarren quitted the gallery of the Vatican, without looking at a single one of the treasures it contained, or even at the place itself.

## CHAPTER IV.

O, Rome! still glorious in thy fallen state,
Proud trophy of the power of Time and Fate;
Thy ruins are more eloquent than all
That ever gifted orators let fall,
To prove the nothingness of pride and fame,
When nought is left thee, save thy mighty name.

In the Corso, some hours after, Strathern encountered Fitzwarren, whose countenance wore an expression of discontent very unusual to its general character.

"Where do you dine?" were the first words he uttered.

"I have no engagement," was the reply.

"Well, then, let us dine together. Do, Strathern, take pity on a poor devil wholly out of his element, and already fit to hang himself."

"Come and dine at my hotel, and meet Beaulieu."

"Agreed. I almost wish I had not come to Rome. It is no place for me."

"Why, being at Rome, do you not do as those at Rome do? Why not see those objects that attract travellers from every country here? Even Beaulieu takes an interest in them, though not more addicted to the study of antiquarian lore than yourself."

"He affects to take an interest in them merely to be able to prate about them when he returns to England, and make believe that he understands something about them; but *I* am no humbug, and can no more go about, led by a *laquais de place*, or a cicerone, staring at things I don't care a rush about, than I could pretend to impose on people by talking of them when I return home. No, Rome is no place for me. Why, would you believe it? when I asked to be taken to the horse-dealers' stables, to amuse myself by looking at their nags, my fellow took me to a filthy lane, the odour of which was insupportable, and into stables which might be compared to the Augean ones assigned to Hercules to cleanse: you see I have not forgotten school. There I saw some eight or ten such brutes as I never before beheld. I had a few trotted out for the fun of the thing, and, by Jove! their action quite equalled their appearance. The breed has changed but little since the time of the ancients, for

these horses are as like some of the *bas relievii* I saw at the Vatican, the only thing I looked at there, as if the marble was copied from them. Great clumsy brutes, with heads like rams, heavy, and slow in their paces, and, when put in a quick movement, looking as if they were galloping after their own heads. I would not ride one of them on any consideration; and when I said so, the fellows in the stable were mightily offended. So here I am, like a fish out of water. At Florence, Normanby lent me a clever nag of his every day. He has a stable full of capital ones, so I got on very well; but here what am I to do? And I endure all this for a girl who refused to admit me when I called at her door. I guessed she was at home, though the servant denied her; and five minutes after I left the house I saw her carriage come to it, and she and her mother step in and drive off. How unlike the Wellerby girls, who, the moment they espied me passing the window of their hotel, began kissing their hands, and beckoning me to come to them."

"The Wellerby girls, as you so unceremoniously designate them, are not remarkable for their reserve. *Au contraire*, they seem to think that they have a right to seize on every unmarried man of fortune who comes to Rome, and try their skill in engrossing his attentions. I advise you, therefore, Fitzwarren, to beware of man-traps set there."

"Thanks for your counsel, my dear fellow, but I am an old bird, and not to be caught with chaff, and she must, indeed, be a sharp one who can take me in. Why, the very reason this girl I am so cursedly in love with captivated me, was, that I saw from the first she did not take the slightest pains to please me. If she had, I am such a knowing chap that, ten to one, I would not have taken such a desperate fancy to her. You don't know, Strathern, what a deep hand I am."

"I confess I did not give you credit for being so much on your guard."

"But I am, though; you should see me when girls are doing all they can to catch me. I remain as cool as a cucumber, by Jove, I do! Contradict them merely to show 'em I am not to be had, and laugh when they talk sentiment. They'll not make a fool of me, I can tell 'em. But this girl, she is quite another sort of thing. I cannot get her out of my head."

"Your heart, you mean; for in love, it is said, the head has very little to do in the matter."

"Head or heart, all I know is, that I never before felt so mi-

serable in all my life. You may laugh, Strathern, but hang me if it isn't true. What can be more vexatious than to be one's own master, with a large fortune, and yet not be able to gain possession of the only thing I desire? I who have hitherto never had a single wish ungratified."

"Your wishes, probably, have heretofore been confined to pleasures easily attained by wealth."

"Yes, and I wish I had now no other, for it maddens me to think that all my fortune would be unavailing to win the only girl I ever really cared about."

"With this conviction, abandon the pursuit, and turn your thoughts to other objects."

"This is much more easily said than done, my good fellow. Why, I can think of nothing else. She is always running in my head, just as my beautiful mare Fanny used to be before I was able to buy her. You'll laugh at me when I tell you that for weeks I could hardly bring myself to look at any other horse, though the dealers were every day trying to tempt me with their primest nags; and so wholly had I set my heart on having Fanny, that I would have given five times the sum I paid for her, large as it was, rather than not have her. Once I have set my mind on a thing, I can't bear being baulked, and people find this out, and take advantage of it."

"But, being aware of this, why do you not exercise some degree of self-control?"

"That is, talk or reason myself out of what I wish for, or else determine to pay only a fair price for it. No, Strathern, life is too short for those who have plenty of money to deny themselves anything that it can purchase. This is my maxim, and the only rule I follow."

"I cannot compliment you on it, for it is founded wholly in selfishness; and wealth was given us for better purposes than mere self-indulgence. Think, Fitzwarren, of all the good you might effect with a portion only of the money you expend for your personal gratifications."

"And do you not expend as large sums in yours? What is the difference, whether I spend my money on horses, hounds, and other pleasures, or, as you do, on pictures, statues, books, and such like? I can see none, and my motto is, every man to his fancy."

"Yet the results are very different. By encouraging painters, sculptors, and literature, I advance the fine arts, and give employ-

ment to those who have devoted their lives to the study of them. This is highly advantageous to my country, and tends to promote its interests."

"And do I not encourage the breed of horses and dogs, by giving enormous prices for them, and afford employment to grooms, helpers, and keepers, by the large stud of nags in my stables? I can see no reason why my money is not as laudably expended as yours is, though in a different way; ay, and more so, for by mine I encourage the agricultural interest of England by increasing the demand for hay and corn, while your pictures, statues, and books consume none. What can you say to this, my good fellow? Have I not given you a pozer? I am no fool, I can tell you, and have studied the matter more deeply than you think. What has old England ever been famous for? said I to myself. For fine horses, racing, and sport, to be sure. What has rendered her superior to the whole world? Why, her horses have. Well, then, he who keeps the greatest number of these noble animals, and encourages racing and hunting, is the truest patriot, and the best friend to the agricultural interest. Live and let live, say I. I quarrel with not man's taste. You like pictures and statues, I dont't; for every day I go out hunting or shooting in England I can see nature, which pleases me more than all the landscapes ever painted. Are brown and yellow trees on canvass, with dark glossy ground and ruined temples, and rivers half green and blue, to be compared to our fresh fields, fine old trees, comfortable farm-houses, and glassy rivers? Can any statues be compared to good flesh and blood? Not any that I ever saw. What can you say against this, Strathern?"

Strathern smiled at the triumphant air of Fitzwarren; but, feeling how useless any of the arguments he could adduce would prove to change his opinion, he declined prolonging the argument, and left his friend master of the field.

"Now Strathern was reckoned one of the cleverest fellows at college," said Lord Fitzwarren to himself, as he walked to his hotel, "yet I had infinitely the best of the argument with him. I did not leave him a word to say—no, not a single word. Hang me, if I don't begin to speak in the House of Lords when I get back! I had no notion I had such a knack until I pozed Strathern. Yes, I'll make a figure in the House. Agricultural interest ad agricultural distress are always popular words in a speech. They sound well, and read well in the papers. This will make me more liked than ever by the farmers,

and render them doubly anxious to preserve the game and the foxes. By Jove! it's a famous notion. I wonder it never came into my head before. How pleasant it will be to have the House crying 'Hear!' 'Hear!' 'Hear!' as I come out with my opinions. I'll say, 'I have reflected long and deeply on the cause of distress in the country.' One must always take credit for having reflected long and deeply, though I dare be sworn the most of the lords have done so as little as I have. Then I'll add, 'I have studied the condition of other countries.' That sounds well; but I won't add, 'by sleeping comfortably in my carriage while travelling, and living wholly with the English abroad.' Yes, I'll get up a speech, I'm determined on it, and astonish the natives when I get back."

The evening of that day Strathern met Miss Sydney and her mother at a small party given by Lady Monthermer, and, at his request, was presented to them. The rare beauty of the young lady attracted, and the calm self-possession of her manner, so unlike those of the generality of the young women he was accustomed to meet, impressed him greatly in her favour. Her mother, a mild and dignified woman, who still retained the traces of no ordinary beauty, differed greatly from the husband-seeking matrons around her, whose civilities towards bachelors of fortune were somewhat too marked not to leave room to doubt their being dictated by mere politeness. When Lord Fitzwarren joined the party, Strathern observed that the countenance of Miss Sydney assumed an air of dissatisfaction, which became increased when, after making his bow to the mistress of the house, he quickly approached her with extended hand, seeming wholly unmindful of the propriety of first addressing her mother. No hand met his outstretched one, and the coldness with which his animated salutations were returned might have checked the advances of a less bold man. Mrs. Sydney, whose presence he at length noticed, was scarcely less reserved in her reception of him than her beautiful daughter had been; nevertheless, he seemed determined to stay near them, addressing his conversation exclusively to the young lady.

"I never was more surprised than when I learned that you had left Florence," said Fitzwarren.

"I know not why you should be so," observed Miss Sydney, with *Glacial* coldness.

"You never told me you intended coming to Rome."

"Our acquaintance was so slight, that I saw no necessity for making you acquainted with our movements."

"That was very ill-natured on your part. The moment, however, I heard you were gone, I determined on seeing Rome also, and now that I am here, I hope we shall meet every day."

The young lady drew up her snowy neck, and looked more disdainful than Strathern thought so beautiful a face could look. Meanwhile several young girls, and some no longer youthful, were casting friendly glances at Fitzwarren, whose eyes were fixed on the only woman in the room who would have shunned them, had she the power, and who was evidently much annoyed by his attention.

"I called at your door this morning," said Fitzwarren, "and was very much disappointed at not finding you at home. To-morrow I hope to be more fortunate."

"My mother and I seldom receive morning visiters."

"You will, I trust, allow me to be one of the few admitted. Pray do; for I have something to say which is of importance."

"You must excuse me, my Lord, and permit me to add, that you can have no communication to make that can be of the least importance to me."

"Why how can you tell, until you know what it is?"

"I am so totally uninterested in any communication coming from a person who is almost a stranger to me, that I must request you to excuse my hearing it."

Miss Sydney turned from her tormentor, and began conversing in French with her mother.

Strathern now ventured to address Mrs. Sydney, and his respectful manner offering so striking and agreeable a contrast to the free and easy one of Lord Fitzwarren, impressed her in his favour, and induced her to listen with interest to his conversation. They spoke of Rome, and the objects so worthy of attention which it contains. Mrs. Sydney's was a highly cultivated mind, well prepared for the contemplation of the classic ruins with which the Eternal City abounds, and for the study of the glorious works of art so calculated to charm a person of fine taste. In Strathern she found a scholar without pedantry—a fine gentleman in the true acceptation of the word, namely, a highly-bred and polite man, equally free from conceit or affectation, as from self-complacency or familiarity, the besetting sins of the young men of the present day. Miss Sydney listened, rather than joined, in the conversation, though it was evident she took a lively interest in it, and the few observations which she made evinced such a knowledge of the subject treated of, as

led Strathern to judge very favourably of her intellect and fine taste. But even had she not spoken, hers was so eloquent a countenance, that he must have been a poor physiognomist who could look on its varying expression while she listened to the conversation carrying on, without being convinced that hers was no ordinary mind. The daughter of such a mother, thought Strathern, could not be otherwise than intellectual; and he was right, for Mrs. Sydney had assiduously cultivated the fertile mind of her lovely daughter, no less by bestowing on her the best education, than by conversing with her ever since her girlhood, on topics selected for conveying instruction, and instilling high principles.

Left a widow while still in the prime of life, and in the possession of personal attractions, and a dowry, which, even had they been much less remarkable, might have insured her many suitors, Mrs. Sydney had devoted herself wholly to the care of her only child, and, true to the memory of a husband fondly beloved and deeply lamented, declined ever giving him a successor in her affections. Her child was *all* to her, and the happiness she could no longer hope to obtain for herself on earth, she looked forward to see her daughter enjoy when grown to womanhood, and consigned to a husband worthy of her. And well did Louisa Sydney repay her doting mother's care, and return her affection. It was, in truth, a pleasant sight to behold the mother and daughter together. The one still fair, touched, but not faded by sorrow, which, more than time, had given that grave cast to a countenance so delicately feminine, that without it she might still have rivalled many a matronly belle of her circle who had no ceased to achieve conquests. The style of dress, too, adopted by Mrs. Sydney, if it made her not look older than she actually was, at least added to the general character of grave dignity which marked her appearance. Louisa Sydney resembled her mother greatly. Above the middle height, she was exquisitely formed, and so graceful were all her movements, that they lent a new charm to her beautiful figure. Her face was of that regular oval so seldom seen but in the works of the ancients; and her features, small and perfect, acquired additional beauty from her fair and transparent complexion, and the rich colour of her lips. Her eyes were of a deep blue, with snowy lids, fringed with silken lashes dark as the straight and well-defined brows that spanned them, and made her forehead appear still more white; her bright brown hair was divided *à la Madonna* on her temples, and bound around her small and finely-shaped head. Her arms, hands,

and feet were faultless, and she presented one of those rare and happy examples of perfect beauty, without any portion of the insipidity often said to appertain to it.

It is not to be wondered at that, with such charms, Louisa Sydney was an object of universal attraction wherever she moved; but, unlike the generality of acknowledged beauties, she appeared as unconscious of her superiority, as of the effects it produced on others. This very unusual unconsciousness, while it precluded vanity, rendered her less indulgent to the admirers attracted by her charms; and, when finding they continued their unwelcomed attentions, notwithstanding the discouragement on her part, there was a coldness almost amounting to sternness in her manner of repelling their troublesome assiduities.

"I fear your admirers will accuse you of rudeness, my dear child," would Mrs. Sydney say to her daughter.

"As long as they cannot accuse me of encouraging their addresses, I shall not care; but really, dearest mother, they seem to presume on our unprotected situation, by the continuance of attentions which they cannot avoid seeing are disagreeable to me, and appear so confident that they must please me, that I cannot resist showing them how great is their error."

"I think, dearest, you might check their advances without betraying any petulance."

"And so I endeavour to do, but some of these men are so vain and confident of their claims to command success, that they provoke me into a sentiment very nearly approaching to anger; and I have not yet acquired sufficient self-control to suppress its symptoms."

Strathern left the party at Lady Monthermer's, thinking more of Miss Sydney than he had ever previously done of any woman, and wondering how Lord Fitzwarren could imagine that so refined and gifted a being could be pleased with his attentions. While he sat at breakfast the next morning, perusing the *Diario di Roma*, Lord Alexander Beaulieu entered. "Do you know, my dear Strathern," said he, after some desultory conversation, "that I am half disposed to turn my thoughts towards the heiress. I hear she has a very large fortune, and to a *cadet de famille* such a wife would be very acceptable. The girl is, I must admit, remarkably beautiful, which is another advantage, for it would preclude any of the spiteful remarks so prevalent in our *cliques* at home when a man marries an heiress."

"To whom do you allude?" asked Strathern, wholly forgetful of

the fact of Miss Sydney being one, so little importance did he attach to that circumstance which has so great an influence with the generality of men.

"To Miss Sydney, to be sure," replied Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "She evidently discourages the attentions of Fitzwarren, which cannot be wondered at, for poor Fitz, though a devilish good sort of fellow, is more fit for his club than for a drawing-room, and more capable of winning the brush at a fox-chase, than the heart of a young and lovely girl like the one in question, and moreover, an heiress."

"Miss Sydney is certainly a very superior person," observed Strathern, "and I agree with you that our friend does not appear to have much chance of making himself acceptable to her."

"I did not pay her any attention last night," resumed Beaulieu, assuming a careless air, "for I thought it best to let her see the *empressement* with which all the other English girls have accepted my civilities. Nothing raises a man so much in the estimation of women as to see him made a fuss of by their own sex, and we certainly have here at present girls who are willing to flirt even with a younger brother rather than not flirt at all. She must have seen last night how *recherché* I am, and that must have made a favourable impression. Yes, I will think of it, and, though a French philosopher has said that marriage may be sometimes convenient, but is never delightful, a truth which so many of our Benedicts at home admit, I would not hesitate to gulp down the pill, provided it is well gilded."

Strathern could have found it in his heart to have knocked the coxcomb down, while, contemplating his image in a large mirror and arranging his hair, this speech was uttered, so indignant did he feel that Miss Sydney could be thus lightly spoken of. In a few minutes after Lord Fitzwarren entered the room.

"Well, Fitz, how goes on your love affair?" demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu, a supercilious smile playing over his face.

"Hang me if I know what to make of the girl!" replied Lord Fitzwarren. "She was positively uncivil to me last night, wasn't she, Strathern? and yet I cannot get her out of my head. I feel about her just as I used to do about horses—the more wicked and shy they were, the fonder I was of them. There was Fanny, always shying, kicking, and plunging—threw me twice, and nearly broke my leg, yet I couldn't bear to sell her, and liked her all the better for her defects. So it is with this girl, the more proud and insolent

she is, the more infatuated I am about her, and hang me if I can help it."

"The mother seems as stately and reserved as the daughter," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"Who cares about the mother?" said Fitzwarren, "One doesn't want to marry her."

"What jointure has she?" asked Lord Alexander.

"Are you thinking of proposing to her?" said Fitzwarren. "Only think, Strathern, having Axy Beaulieu for a father-in-law. By Jove, it would be capital fun! Well, you shall have my support, I promise you, and really, now that I reflect on it, the widow is still a devilish fine woman, and does not look above six and thirty."

"What say you to marrying her yourself, Fitz, when the daughter rejects you, for reject you I am positive she will."

"I'll bet you a cool hundred she doesn't."

"Make it five, and I'll take you."

"Done; five let it be."

"Yes, but mind you must regularly pop the question. No bubble bet—for, if *you* don't propose, she can't refuse."

"What a knowing hand Axy is! Always suspicious, always afraid of being done."

Strathern arose, rang for his carriage, and, disgusted with both his *soi-disant* friends, left them, and proceeded to visit the *atelier* of an English sculptor engaged in a work for him. On entering, the first persons he met were Mrs. Sydney and her daughter; and the dignified and graceful demeanour of both ladies made him feel still more indignant towards the two men he had so lately heard calculating, nay, betting, on the chance of being accepted as the husband of one, and jesting on the subject of the other. The mild and amiable greeting of the mother was more congenial to his feelings than the cold and reserved recognition accorded to him by the daughter. This reserve operated as a check to prevent his endeavouring to make himself agreeable to the young lady, so he addressed his conversation chiefly to her mother, and was rewarded by Mrs. Sydney's listening with interest to his opinions on art, and expressing her coincidence with most of them. Lady Wellerby and her daughters soon after entered the studio.

"Well met, Mrs. Sydney," said the former. "We have just left our cards and a note at your door, to request you and Miss Sydney to come to us to-morrow evening."

The invitations accepted, Lady Wellerby turned to Strathern, and exclaimed :—

"Ah! truant; so I have caught you at last. Where have you been hiding yourself? We have been to all the artists to admire the beautiful works they are executing for you, and came here to look at the Nymph; do, pray, Mr. Gibson, let me see it."

From the moment that the statue was uncovered, Lady Wellerby and her daughters were loud in their praises of it. "Beautiful!" "Exquisite!" "Charming!" "So graceful!" "So original!" were uttered alternately by these ladies, while Mrs. Sydney and her daughter stood in mute admiration, much more flattering to the sculptor, as well as to the owner of the statue, than the affected enthusiasm displayed by the others.

"It is indeed admirable," said Mrs Sydney, after a long pause.

"Yes," murmured her lovely daughter.

And Strathern felt that never before had he heard that monosyllable so sweetly pronounced.

"Ah! Mr. Gibson, I see you have profited by our frequent visits to your studio," said Lady Wellerby.

The sculptor looked puzzled, and began to express his ignorance of her ladyship's precise meaning.

"Don't deny it; I am not at all displeased. You did quite right; there is nothing like having nature to copy from."

"I really do not comprehend your ladyship."

"Why, it is as plain as possible that my daughter, Lady Olivia, has furnished a model, and realised your *beau idéal* for this charming Nymph. It is as like as possible—the same turn of the head, the unaffected ease of the attitude, the expression of countenance; and, above all, the exact resemblance of the face and bust; yes, it is the very image. I appeal to Mr. Strathern. Don't you think the likeness striking?"

"I cannot say it occurred to me," replied Strathern.

"Nor to me," observed Lady Sophia Wellerby. "Why, Olivia has a long, thin face, and a....."

"I beg I may not be made the subject of your personal remarks," said the Lady Olivia, blushing with anger at the evident intention of her sister to depreciate her attractions, but feeling no shame at her mother's folly in making, or rather in affecting to make, the discovery of the likeness where not a trace could be really found.

"Olivia is so free from vanity, that she shrinks from anything that may be construed into a compliment," whispered Lady Wel-

lerby to Strathern and Mrs. Sydney; "but, really, it is strange," continued she aloud, "that in all the works executed for Mr. Strathern I can trace a remarkable likeness to both my girls; and, although the sculptors deny having had the intention of taking them for models, I nevertheless cannot divest myself of the notion that, seeing them so frequently in their studios, they may have, perhaps involuntarily, copied, if not all, at least a considerable portion of their works from my daughters. The arms and hands of Mr. Westmacott's charming statue appear really to be *fac-similes* of Sophia's, and the head strikingly resembles Olivia."

Lord Fitzwarren now entered the *atelier*, bluntly saying he only came in because he saw Strathern's carriage at the door, and, not knowing what to do with himself, wished to be told where to go.

"You are come in time to decide whether I am right or wrong in asserting that this statue bears a strong resemblance to Lady Olivia," said Lady Wellerby.

"Lady Olivia!" exclaimed Fitzwarren. "Not the slightest—not the least; no more like than my mare Fanny is to Taglioni, Dullington's favourite mare. This statue looks like a regular thoroughbred creature—small bone, high condition, fine head, well put on; and Lady Olivia's head is large, and she is ewe-necked, and....."

"Reserve your comparisons for the stables or horsedealer's yard, my dear Fitzwarren," said Strathern, interrupting the catalogue of defects which he felt certain his friend was about to utter, and pitying the evident dismay of the poor girl on whom her mother's folly was about to draw this punishment.

"By Jove! I wish I had brought some of my favourite horses here," resumed Fitzwarren, nothing embarrassed at the timely interruption to his former rude speech. "I should like of all things to have them copied in marble by this gentleman," turning round and nodding to Mr. Gibson. "Hang me, if I shouldn't like to build a large gallery at my place, and have my favourite horses in marble ranged down each side of it, with my stud-grooms, in their stable dress, standing near them, and my dogs too. It would please me much more than the gallery my grandfather built and filled with statues, some of them patched and mended, which he gave a mint of money for at Rome."

"You are a perfect original, Lord Fitzwarren," lisped the Lady Sophia Wellerby, with a most winning smile.

"And you a good copy," was the blunt answer.

"Of whom, or of what?" asked the young lady; but, luckily, before an answer could be given, and the chances were that it would not be a flattering one, Mrs. Sydney and her daughter moved to depart, and Lord Fitzwarren rushed to offer his assistance to hand them to their carriage. Strathern, however, was before him, and, while he gave his arm to Mrs. Sydney, he overheard her lovely daughter decline the offered one of Fitzwarren.

"What have I done that you are always so uncivil to me?" said the peer.

"If you think me uncivil, why offer your attentions?" replied the young lady.

"Because I can't help it," said he; "but do tell me why you are uncivil?"

"I will be as unceremonious as yourself, and confess that I wish to discourage attentions that are disagreeable to me."

"But, tell me, do, for God's sake, how I can make myself less disagreeable to you?"

"By avoiding me." And here further parley was prevented by the young lady entering her carriage, into which Strathern had just handed her mother: and Fitzwarren, with a most rueful countenance, was left looking after the vehicle as it drove off, so engrossed by reflections on his slighted passion, that Strathern had thrice slapped him on the shoulder ere he was aroused from his reverie.

"Yes," said he, "I begin to think that Axy Beaulieu will win my five hundred if I pop the question, for I never saw a girl so obstinate and ill-natured. I wish I could get her out of my head; but, hang me! the more I try the less I succeed. Here comes that fellow, Beaulieu. Don't tell him that my chance looks so bad, for he'd crow over me. I must try to get up another bet with him as a hedge; but he's such a knowing one, that I must look sharp, or he will take me in."

## CHAPTER V.

O, Sympathy! thou choicest gift of Heaven,
The bond to knit true hearts, in mercy given
To soothe the ills that e'er on mortals wait,
And yield a balm for all the ills of fate.
Without thee what is life? A dreary waste
Where only brief and empty joys we taste;
Still pining some companion soul to find
With tastes harmonious and congenial mind,
Where thought meets thought, as e'en in mirrors we
Reflected back our own resemblance see.

"I like Mr. Strathern exceedingly," observed Mrs. Sydney to her daughter, as they sat together in her drawing-room after dinner on the day that they had met our hero at the studio of Mr. Gibson.

"Yes, he appears agreeable and well-bred," was the reply. "Nevertheless, after what Lord Alexander Beaulieu said about his fancying that every unmarried woman who is only commonly civil has designs on him, I confess I feel no desire to administer to his vanity by evincing any wish of cultivating his acquaintance."

"Beware, my dear Louisa, of betraying a pertinacity in avoiding it," said Mrs. Sydney, "for *that* would be almost as flattering to a vain man as if you showed a desire to know him. But, notwithstanding Lord Alexander Beaulieu's report, I am not disposed to think Mr. Strathern a vain man. Handsome men are rarely so, and you must admit that he is remarkably good-looking."

"Yes, he is well enough," replied Miss Sidney.

"Well enough! Why, my dear child, that is just the term one would apply to Lord Alexander Beaulieu's looks, but it surely is not the one to designate so distinguished and handsome a man as Mr. Strathern."

"He does not strike me as being so remarkably handsome," observed the fair Louisa; but a blush which rose to her cheek might have betrayed, had her mother noticed it, her consciousness of being disingenuous for the first time in her life.

"I see you are prejudiced against him, my child," said the unsuspicious mother, "and I am sorry that you allow yourself to be so. Do not take for granted all that you hear reported in society.

You know not the misrepresentations—sometimes unintentional, and more frequently the reverse—made by persons to influence others against those of whom they are envious, or to whom they entertain a dislike."

"But surely Lord Alexander Beaulieu would not be guilty of the meanness of telling a falsehood, and he positively did assert that Mr. Strathern believed every woman who said a civil word to be in love with him."

"There are some persons, and I am inclined to think that Lord Alexander Beaulieu is among the number, who are prone to colour their impressions so highly that they state for fact that which they only suspect. I have heard him more than once describe some of his acquaintances known to me so differently from what they really are, that I should be very cautious how I accorded credence to his reports."

Louisa Sydney was not sorry to hear her mother, for whose judgment she entertained a great respect, throw doubts on the truth of Lord Alexander Beaulieu's statement, for it was painful to her to think that a man who seemed in every other respect so superior should have the unpardonable vanity ascribed to him by his *soi-disant* friend—a vanity, above all others, the least likely to find favour in the eyes of a high-minded woman of delicacy. She, however, made no farther remark, and Mrs. Sydney let the subject drop.

At Lady Wellerby's, the next evening, Strathern met Mrs. and Miss Sydney, and again devoted the greater portion of the evening, to conversing with them. His admiration for Louisa increased every hour, but, had he not been attracted towards *her*, the charm of her mother's conversation would have led him to prefer her society to that of any other woman in Rome, while she, finding him the most rational and agreeable man in their circle, was glad to escape the trite and common-place chat of the other young men by conversing with him.

With the generality of the English ladies then in the Eternal City, Mrs. Sydney had but little sympathy. They, for the greater part, consisted of match-making mothers, looking out for rich bachelors, in the hope of converting them into Benedicts—women of fashion, whose pursuits and occupations were so precisely the same in Rome as in London, that it seemed unaccountable why they should have journeyed so far to follow the same routine of crowded *soirées* and nightly rubbers of whist as at home. Other ladies there

were whose amusements were even of a less innocent nature—women whose sole pleasure consisted in being admired, and in exciting the envy of rival *belles*. Their flirtations furnished topics to the ill-natured portion of the society in which they moved, and speculations as to the extent to which these flirtations were carried. How would they, thoughtless and imprudent as they were, have shrunk with dismay, could they but have heard even a tenth part of the scandalous suspicions and injurious assertions to which the levity of their conduct gave rise!—but they heard only the insidious flatteries of their artful admirers, who, bent on exhibiting them as their conquests, cared little how the reputations of those ladies to whom they paid such marked attentions suffered, provided their own vanity was gratified by the display of their triumphs.

Sometimes a diversity was afforded by the presence of Russian nobles, with unpronounceable names, and fair wives sparkling in jewels, greatly enjoying the temporary liberty accorded to them by their paternal sovereign, who likes his subjects so well that he seldom permits them to be long absent from his sight. It was pleasant to see them basking in the sunshine of Italy, enjoying it as only the inhabitants of the cold region whence they came can, but always taking care to assure those with whom they conversed, that Russia was by no means a bad climate, and that the Emperor was, as every faithful subject is in duty bound to think, the perfection of human nature. Germans, too, mingled in the crowd of strangers sojourning at Rome, and might easily be recognised by the gravity and earnestness which characterises that thinking people. They examined and reflected on all the objects most worthy of attention, and lived more in the past than the actual present. They were much prone to refer at night to the sights that had most interested them during the *giros* of the day, their imaginations being filled with the thoughts they awakened. But they found few of any other nation ready to converse with them on such topics, all allusion to antiquity being, by fashionable society at Rome, voted a bore, and those who talked of it were soon avoided. The Parisian visitants at Rome were as well-dressed and as lively as if in their own gay capital—setting the *modes* to the rest of the *beau monde*, and fully conscious of the importance of a toilette *sans reproche*. A *bas bleu* might sometimes be seen, who bestowed on the inner circle of *haut ton* the knowledge acquired from her *laquais de place* or guide-book; and groups might be met of the most estimable, though not the most agreeable, portion of society, the

unsophisticated wives and daughters of English country gentlemen, tempted to roam by the supercilious airs assumed over them in their own rural neighbourhoods by the travelled lords and ladies, who prated about Italy as familiarly as if they talked of the next village in their own county, and appeared to despise those who had not seen it.

Mrs. Sydney could sometimes scarcely forbear a smile, as she beheld some large and unwieldy matron, dressed in the obsolete mode of three years gone by, linked to the arm of a husband as obese as herself, his shining bald head encircled by a few stray locks of silvery hue, and his deeply-coloured red cheeks protuding from his snowy cravat—reminding one of a lobster in its shell served on a damask napkin—shouldering their way to the mistress of the *fête* followed by their daughters, likewise linked arm-in-arm, all and each evidently alarmed and embarrassed.

In such an incongruous society, it was no wonder that Mrs. Sydney was glad to find a well-educated and refined man like Strathern, with whom she could converse of the sights seen in the morning, or those to be visited on the morrow.

And now Strathern asked and obtained permission to call on her, and sometimes to accompany her in her tour of sight-seeing, and glad was he to observe that by degrees the reserve of Miss Sydney, amounting on their first acquaintance almost to avoidance, wore off, and she would take a part in the conversation, revealing, while she did so, a very superior mind, in the cultivation of which nothing that could inform, strengthen, or enliven it, had been neglected. But though her reserve diminished, her manner towards Strathern was widely different from that of the other unmarried ladies of his acquaintance, and the most vain man must have owned that it held out little encouragement for his paying more marked attention. The pleasure he found in a society so congenial to his taste as that of Mrs. Sydney and her lovely daughter was often alloyed by the presence of Lord Fitzwarren, who, despite of all the coldness of the mother and undisguised dislike of the daughter, continued to obtrude himself upon them whenever an opportunity offered. He haunted their paths, following them in all their *giros*, and hovering near them at every evening party with a pertinacity most annoying to them both, and equally so to Strathern. In vain did the latter remonstrate on the impropriety of continuing attentions evidently unwelcome to the object of them. Fitzwarren would say in answer to such representations,

"Faint heart never won fair lady. Who knows but in time I may conquer her repugnance; and only think what a triumph it would be to me if I were at once to carry off this fair prize, and win Axy Beaulieu's five hundred into the bargain!"

"Be assured you will do neither, Fitzwarren, and I, as your friend, tell you so."

"Has she authorized you to make this communication?"

"No; I cannot say she has."

"Then how do you know that I have no chance?"

"I judge so from her evident avoidance of you, which you also must have observed."

"That goes for nothing. One must never mind woman's frowns or coldness; both are often only assumed, and many of the sex have been known to smile on those they least care for, and frown on those to whom they are not indifferent. Women are like horses, you never can tell what to make of them. Why, I have had nags that would prick up their ears and look vicious whenever I approached them, yet they never attempted to kick or bite *me*, while they looked as mild as lambs when strangers entered the stable, but nevertheless tried to injure them. Such may be the case with this girl."

"I think you are mistaken in this instance, Fitzwarren, and that you have no right to annoy Miss Sydney."

"Annoy her!" Why, what woman was ever annoyed by seeing a man desperately in love with her? Ah! you don't know the sex as well as I do, Strathern; if you did, you would think differently."

"My knowledge of women of refined minds and habits—and Mrs. and Miss Sydney are surely among the most distinguished of this class—enables me to judge that the line of conduct you pursue in tormenting a young lady who has never, even by your own showing, vouchsafed you the least encouragement, is not calculated to elevate you in her estimation, or in that of those who witness it."

"But why should not Miss Sydney be as civil to me as to you?"

"Because I have never presumed to pay her any more marked attention than that respectful courtesy which is due from every wellbred man to a woman."

"That is, you are not in love with her, and I am."

Strathern felt the blood mount to his cheek at this observation,

for he was already conscious that Miss Sydney had excited in his breast an interest never previously experienced by him for any of her sex. He was glad that Fitzwarren had not noticed his momentary embarrassment; and he again essayed to convince his obtuse friend of the impropriety of continuing a pursuit that could lead only to disappointment.

"But," interrupted Fitzwarren, "had you, like me, fallen in love with Miss Sydney, what would you have done?"

"I would have confined myself to a distant and respectful manner towards her, until I had so far cultivated her acquaintance as to be enabled to judge from her behaviour to me whether any more marked attentions on my part would not be acceptable."

"And so give some other fellow the time to step in and cut you out. No, no, I am not such a fool. Consider also that, besides my liking the girl, which I really do, I have five hundred pounds at stake."

"To name such a consideration with reference to Miss Sydney is really unworthy, and, to have made or accepted a wager on such a subject, is till more so."

"You have your notions on this point, and I have mine," said Fitzwarren, half offended with his friend: and, turning on his heel, he left him, affecting to show his indifference to his advice by humming a tune.

"Yes," said Strathern, when he found himself alone, "this lovely girl has made so deep an impression on my heart, that if she rejects its homage, it will be long, if ever, before I recover the happy freedom I enjoyed before I knew her. And yet what is the happiness of freedom in comparison with the love of such a woman, could I but hope to win her? But her reserve, her coldness, do they not prove her more than indifference to me? It is true, she has gradually become less cold, less reserved; nevertheless, however closely I may scrutinize her manner towards me, I cannot flatter myself into the belief that I stand higher in her estimation than any other of the herd of admirers who hover around her, unless it be Fitzwarren, for whom I see she entertains a positive dislike. Could I but hope to conciliate her regard, to vanquish that stately reserve, which, though diminished, still so often chills me, how happy should I be!"

Urged on by this hope, Strathern left nothing undone to please both mother and daughter, yet carefully avoiding to reveal the deep interest he felt in the success of his efforts, until assured that an

avowal of his sentiments would not be ill received. He hoped much, but he feared more; and, though in him was exemplified the truth of the verse—

> "None without hope e'er lov'd the brightest fair,
> For love will hope where reason would despair;"

yet, so timid was he, as all true lovers are, that he mistrusted his own good qualities, both personal and mental, being worthy to secure for him the prize he sought.

Society at Rome is so constituted that the members of that called, *par excellence*, *la plus haute*, are in the daily and nightly habit of meeting. They encounter each other in the Vatican, St. Peter's, the artists' studios, on the Monte Pincio, and in the Villa Borghese. These frequent encounters, after some lapse of time, tend to establish a footing of familiarity that it would take an acquaintance of years to bring about in London, where so many different cliques exist, each and all with their separate and united claims on the attention of their votaries.

Strathern blessed the chances thus afforded him of constantly meeting the object of his passion, while he deplored the opportunity furnished also to others to obtrude their attentions on her. Lord Alexander Beaulieu was as unremitting, though less offensive in the mode of evincing his admiration of Miss Sydney, as was Lord Fitzwarren. Better versed in *les bienséances du monde*, and in his knowledge of women, he did not persecute Miss Sydney by his engrossing attention, nor *afficher* his aim in seeking her society. When questioned by Fitzwarren as to the motive which drew him so often near that young lady, he would laughingly declare that he only went for the purpose of watching his chance of winning the wager of five hundred. Strathern was too quick-sighted to be imposed on by this excuse, made in his presence; for he saw that Lord Alexander was exerting every art with which his *savoir faire* furnished him to captivate Miss Sydney, but his assiduities created as little alarm in the heart of the lover as they did interest in that of the lady to whom they were addressed. The same high sense of the perfections of the fair Louisa which led Strathern to doubt the possibility of his own worthiness to win her, made him feel certain that the worldly-minded and commonplace Lord Alexander Beaulieu was not a rival to be dreaded. But Lord Alexander had none of the diffidence that ever attends true love, and marks real merit. His perseverance, however, in vain attempts to render himself

agreeable to Miss Sydney only served to increase her coldness towards him, while his not having yet made her an offer of his hand precluded her from positively dismissing him from the train of suitors, which, like those of the famed Penelope, increased daily, lured on less by her charms than by the fortune which she was reputed to possess. The extent of this train greatly mortified the spinsters of her acquaintance and their mammas, and excited in their breasts no slight degree of envy and dislike towards the lovely and amiable girl, who would gladly have dispensed with attentions absolutely irksome to her, and which her good sense taught her to estimate at their just value.

"I am sure I cannot see what the men find to admire in Miss Sydney," would the Lady Sophia Wellerby exclaim to her mother and sister.

"Nor I neither," was sure to be the response of Lady Olivia.

"She is very insipid, in my opinion, and there is no decided character in her beauty," would Lady Sophia observe.

"I have no patience with that modern Nimrod, Lord Fitzwarren, who follows her like her shadow, although she vouchsafes not to notice his presence, except by a disdainful glance," the Lady Olivia would remark.

"You forget that Miss Sydney is an heiress, and that circumstance is quite sufficient to explain the homage she receives. Those who may not be much struck with her *beaux yeux* find those of her *cassette* irresistible, and, were she less good-looking than she is, she would be certain of having an equal number of admirers," put in their lady-mother.

"But Mr. Strathern, the fastidious and rich Mr. Strathern, cannot be suspected of mercenary motives."

"No; nor Lord Fitzwarren, who has so large a fortune that he cannot require hers," replied Lady Olivia.

"Don't imagine that because men are rich they are less desirous to mate them with rich wives," would Lady Wellerby observe. "Money desires to beget money, and there is no man, whatever his wealth may be, who does not wish to see it increased."

"Then, look at Lord Alexander Beaulieu; he, too, is paying his court to the heiress!"

"Poor fellow! probably his *poverty* rather than his *will* consents," and the Lady Olivia deeply sighed at the recollection of certain pressures of the hand given by the said Lord Alexander, some five or six years before, when she had better grounds for the pretensions,

still maintained, of a beauty than at present, and when her ladyship was but little disposed to throw away her time on a younger son, scantily provided with the goods of fortune.

"Oh! it's all fair for younger sons to look out for rich wives, and for portionless girls to endeavour to wed men of fortune," would the mercenary mother say; an opinion which had due weight and influence with her daughters, whose anxiety to act up to her notions on this point led them to adopt a line of conduct in reality well calculated to defeat the end it sought to achieve.

"I foresee," said Lady Wellerby, one morning when her temper, soured by her losses at the card-table the preceding evening, was more than usually irritable, "that this Roman campaign will be followed by no better results than our winters at Paris and Naples, and our summer at the Baths of Lucca. Your father is as sulky as possible, and swears he will never come abroad again. I lose night after night to that odious Lady Melcombe, or that hateful Mrs. Manvers Royston, who never fail to remind me of the amount of my debts to them until they are paid; and because I asked Lord Wellerby to make me an advance on my next year's pin-money, he absolutely stormed. If you girls could only manage to secure husbands, our end in coming abroad would be accomplished, and your father would be less vexed at the expense we have incurred."

"But what can we do, mamma?" demanded Lady Sophia, in a tone half angry, half plaintive.

"Yes, what are we to do, or, rather, what have we left undone?" exclaimed Lady Olivia.

"Have I not been sentimental with Mr. Strathern, and sprightly with Lord Fitzwarren, until tired beyond measure, by enacting both *rôles?*" resumed Lady Sophia.

"And I," said her sister, "have I not talked of antiques? To enable me to do which, I have bored myself with poring over Heaven only knows how many musty old *tomes*, and learned by rote half the guide-books; and yet Mr. Strathern takes no more interest in my erudite conversation than in my sister's sentimentalities."

"And have I not listened to Lord Fitzwarren's details of his stud, and the superior management of it, with episodes of his favourite mare Fanny, until I have made myself ill by my endeavours to suppress the yawns he excited; and yet what has all this produced?"

"Do not despair; it may yet accomplish some end," said the wily mother. "I have observed with regret that ever since you discovered that he is wholly engrossed by that insipid girl, Miss

Sydney, you have grown cold and careless towards him. This is bad policy, very bad policy indeed. You should, *au contraire*, affect to believe him on the point of marriage with the heiress, by which *ruse* any of the attentions or flatteries you exercise towards him will appear so perfectly disinterested that he cannot suspect a motive, and will feel a friendly disposition for you; and when he is refused by Miss Sydney, as he surely will be, who knows but he may turn for consolation to one of you? I have seen such things happen, by good management, that this would not at all surprise me; so mind what you are about, and don't despair. Another counsel I have to give you is, always praise Miss Sydney in his presence. This will disarm him still more of suspicion, for weak men, and he is one, are always suspicious: whereas any ill-natured comments on her person (and I heard you both indulge in some a few evenings ago with the Oswald girls) will make you appear envious and jealous, and cause him to dislike you."

"But, indeed, mamma, it is scarcely possible to have sufficient self-control to praise the looks of a person whom we think by no means handsome."

"Stuff, nonsense! Don't we every day commend what we really disapprove, and *vice versâ?* Am I not compelled to tell Lady Alice Dunnington that her dull dinners and *ennuyeuses soirées* are charming, and to thank the deaf and stammering Prince of Hesselwitzer for the honour and pleasure his company has afforded us, when I am almost exhausted by the infliction? If persons living in the *beau monde* are obliged to have recourse to this frequent exercise of self-control demanded by *bienséance*, and practised by every one in a certain circle, without the hope of any greater reward than being considered *bien élevé et aimable*, surely, when so great a prize as a rich and noble husband is in view, it is well worth being attended to. Who ever now-a-days gets a husband—that is to say, one worth having—without the exercise of tact to learn his peculiar tastes, and without adopting them, at least for the time present? What made Lady Maria Leslie risk her neck out hunting three days a-week last winter in Northamptonshire, but to win that rich booby, Mr. Sudley Seymour, who never would have proposed for her had she not affected to be as devoted to the chace as himself? What made that pretty Miss Hunter dance herself nearly into a consumption, but to catch Lord Merridale, who, ever since he returned from Russia, thought or dreamt of nothing but the gallopade? Look at Miss Melville's feats in

archery, only practised to aim with unerring dart at the heart of the stupid Sir Henry Ravenshaw; and Lady Fanny Harcourt's indefatigable study of music, in order to accompany that melo-maniac, Mr. Torpichen, in his difficult duets, until she made herself so necessary to him, that he engaged her for a duet through life?"

"But surely, mamma, you don't mean to say that every man only marries because he is lured into wedlock by some scheming girl, such as you have described?" said Lady Sophia.

"Or," said her sister, "that all those women whom you have named only adopted the pursuits mentioned for the sole purpose of winning husbands?"

"I do positively mean what I have said, and those only who are ignorant of the world would doubt what I have asserted. It is the interest of women to get married, and of men to remain single. Both parties are fully aware of this, and it requires all the tact for which our sex are much more remarkable than the male, to lure these last into the net spread to secure them."

Among the English lately arrived at Rome, Mr. Rhymer made his appearance.

"I left Naples," said he, "because I found the society there insupportable, and here, with a few, a very few, exceptions, I find it equally dull and disagreeable."

"Your presence cannot fail to enliven us," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu, winking at one of his friends present.

"I was not aware that there was anything so *very* exhilarating in my appearance," replied Mr. Rhymer, looking daggers at Beaulieu. "I hear, however," resumed he, "that *you* require no enlivening, whatever you may do enlightening, and that you still pursue the fickle Goddess as assiduously in Imperial Rome as in commercial London."

"To which of the fickle goddesses do you refer?—for you know that there are two to whom that term is applicable."

"*You*, I know, court both, so I leave you to guess which I referred to. *A propos* of goddesses, how is the heiress? I hear that a physician is not more punctual in his visits to a rich patient than you are in yours to Miss Sydney."

"That young lady is, I am happy to say, quite well."

"I am glad, though surprised, to learn it, but hers must be a remarkably good constitution to support all she has to encounter. I always pity heiresses, and more especially when, as in the present case, they are handsome."

"May I inquire why they so peculiarly excite your commiseration?"

"Who would not feel pity to see a poor girl— no, a *rich* girl, I should say—hunted down by every needy fellow who wants to prop his fallen fortunes by hers, thinking no more of her person or her mind than if neither merited attention? An ugly heiress must know she is only chosen for her wealth, and is less to be pitied, if, with this knowledge, she risks her happiness with a fortune-hunter: but a handsome heiress may indulge the illusion that she is loved for herself, and woe be to her when she discovers, as soon she surely must, the truth!"

"But may not a handsome heiress be loved for herself?" demanded Lord Alexander Beaulieu, evidently piqued by the *coups de patte* of the cynical Mr. Rhymer, not one of which had missed its objects.

"Certainly, she may; but it must only be by a man rich enough to afford falling in love, without any view to pecuniary motives, and whose character, no less than his wealth, exempts him from the suspicion of such."

"Then you think that a man who is not rich cannot love a handsome woman for herself, if she happen to have a large fortune? Have not poor men eyes to see and hearts to feel beauty, as well as the rich?"

"I deny it not; but I believe that a poor man, if he have delicate feelings, will avoid heiresses, however great their personal attractions may be; and, if he be a proud man, will not expose himself to the accusation of being a fortune-hunter—an accusation, in my opinion, peculiarly humiliating to a gentleman."

So saying, Mr. Rhymer walked away, leaving Lord Alexander Beaulieu vexed, but unchanged in his intentions of trying to win the heiress.

"How I hate that old cynic!" thought the selfish lordling, as he strolled through the Piazza d'Espagne. "His age and infirmities screen him from the correction which his malice so frequently merits, and, aware of his impunity, he thinks himself privileged to annoy all those with whom he comes in contact. But no, not all, for to the rich and great he is as obsequious as he is insolent to those who are not in a position to gratify his *parvenu* taste for grandeur. He is quite capable of prejudicing Mrs. Sydney and her daughter against me, so I must not break with him, though I find the utmost difficulty in restraining my temper when I hear his bitter sarcasms and spiteful insinuations. If I should succeed in winning

the heiress, how I will vex the old fellow! He shall never come into my house, I can tell him; and I will find a hundred ways of mortifying him, to avenge my present compelled forbearance. O, poverty! how many evils dost thou entail! and surely the being obliged to submit to insolence from *parvenus* is not among the least bitter of the trials inflicted by thee. I could, for the nonce, be poetical, and indite a sonnet suggested by that olden inspirer of poetry, Poverty, which has deigned to set the brains of so many *attic* writers to work; but I have not time to coquet with the Muse to-day, and so I must smooth my brow, enact the amiable to the heiress, and defeat the machinations of my enemies, among whom I have not, my duns excepted, a more spiteful one than old Rhymer. *A propos* of duns, I hear from England that mine are more clamorous and vindictive than ever, enraged by my escape from their clutches. What an oversight is it in the legislature not to have enacted a law for the protection of the persons of the younger sons of the nobility from all law processes. Protection is afforded to peers, who seldom require it; while we, poor devils, nurtured in a mode that must create a passion for expense, and with small means to defray it, are left exposed to all the evil consequences of indulging in our natural tastes. This oversight really ought to be remedied, and I must suggest the consideration of it to some of my friends at home."

Such were the reflections that passed through the mind of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he paced up and down the Piazza d'Espagne, not knowing how better to employ his time until the usual hour for paying visits shoul arrive. He expected also to meet Lord Fitzwarren, on whom he generally fastened himself during a portion of the day, for the sake of sharing his *voiture de remise*, without being compelled to hire one for his own use, and who, rather than dine alone, was wont to engage him to dinner, which saved Lord Alexander the expense of that repast, and secured him a much more luxurious one, as well as better wine, than his own funds could provide. But though content to avail himself of all the advantages to be derived from the liberality of his friend, no sentiment of regard or gratitude towards him existed in the selfish heart of Lord Alexander Beaulieu. His system was to profit by the generosity or weakness of all with whom he associated; and pertinaciously did he put this system in action. Had any person attempted to prove to him that he ought to be grateful for the hospitality he received, he would have smiled at his simplicity, and asserted that he had incurred no

obligation, for that Lord Fitzwarren, like many others of his class, only extended his hospitality because he could not bear to be alone. For every other kindness experienced he found some casuistical excuse for feeling no gratitude, and hence cared for no one, whatever might be the benefits received from him.

## CHAPTER VI.

His was a power in all he saw
Most quickly to detect a flaw:
And none he spared; to foe or friend
His censure did alike extend.
In courteous phrase to ladies fair
He laid their secret errors bare,
Commended virtues they had not,
And those they truly had, forgot:
In short, he was a man of might,
To shoot his arrows dipp'd in spite.

When Lord Alexander Beaulieu called on Mrs. Sydney he found Strathern there, looking over some ancient maps of Rome with that lady, while her fair daughter was occupied in transcribing an Italian poem from one of her favourite authors. His visit seemed to afford little pleasure to any of the persons present; but Mrs. Sydney, with a good breeding of which, however her patience might be tried, she never lost sight, betrayed less than did the others that his presence was disagreeable to her.

Lord Alexander took a chair near Louisa, and endeavoured to draw her into conversation, but monosyllables were all he could obtain in reply, and, *malgré* his efforts to enact the agreeable, he found the task a very difficult one with a listener so cold and abstracted as the one he was addressing. The emptiness of commonplace chat is never so much felt as when only one person takes a lively part in it. The thousand little trifles which compose the conversation between those who meet at visits, may pass off without their silliness striking one, provided no pause occurs, and that each contributes his or her quota to the general stock of words; but, when those awkward breaks take place, which prove the total absence of interest in one of the interlocutors to what is passing, the

volubility of even the most intrepid *bavard* becomes checked, and he feels that he has not succeeded in his attempts to please. Lord Alexander Beaulieu experienced this disagreeable consciousness on the occasion described, and was thankful when Mrs. Sydney relieved his embarrassment by addressing a few words to him.

"I hear that Mr. Rhymer is arrived," observed Mrs. Sydney. "Have you seen him, Mr. Strathern?"

"Not yet," replied he; "but I dare say I soon shall."

"I have," observed Lord Alexander, "and can assure you that the warm sun of Naples has ripened his growing acrimony most surprisingly. He is now become a perfect misanthrope."

"No; that I must deny," said Strathern; "he is only a corrector, and not a hater, of mankind. He tells disagreeable truths, careless of the pain they may inflict on those to whom they are addressed, it must be owned, and hence is more feared than loved."

"Misanthropes never found so good an advocate," observed Mrs. Sydney, "as in a French author of celebrity, who in a recent work asserts that '*la misanthropie est un sentiment calomnié. C'est la haine du mensonge. Il n'y a pas de misanthropes, il y a des âmes qui aiment mieux fuir que feindre.*'"

"If Rhymer would be *feindre ou fuir* I should forgive him," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "but, as he will do neither, I hold him to be as insupportable in society as children who are permitted to say all they think when admitted to the drawing-room. I have heard the little urchins exclaim, 'Why is Mr. So-and-so lame?' or, 'Mr. So-and-so very ugly?' causing no less embarrassment to the unfortunate persons so noticed than to the papa and mamma of these tiresome little creatures. They, poor things, know no better, and do not mean to give pain; but Rhymer is well aware of the *endroit sensible* of those he wishes to annoy, and the Parthian's dart was not more unerring in its aim than are his sarcasms."

"They jest at scars who never felt a wound," observed Mrs. Sydney, "and therefore I may smile at those sometimes inflicted, when not too deep, on the persons selected by Mr. Rhymer, who, I must add, generally aims them only at the foolish or the vain."

"Nevertheless, mother, do you not think that the privilege he claims of saying disagreeable things disturbs the harmony of society?" demanded Miss Sydney.

Perhaps so, my dear Louisa, by making one feel insecure in his presence, and....."

"Mr. Rhymer," said a servant, throwing open the door, and in walked that gentleman.

"I only arrived late last night," said he, "and my first visit is to you," and he bowed low on the hand of Mrs. Sydney, and then turned to her fair daughter to repeat the same ceremony.

"How well you look, ladies! I was hardly prepared to find you both so blooming."

"We have neither of us been ill since we came to Italy," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"I did not think that the air of Italy could produce any unsalutary effect on your health; but, if I might be permitted a bad pun, and a pronunciation adopted by my old friend John Kemble, I should say it was not your *room*, but your company, that I thought dangerous!"

"Very flattering to all of us who have the honour of forming a portion of the society of these ladies," remarked Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"I am no flatterer," was the reply of Mr. Rhymer, "and so I fancied you thought this morning, for you looked very much displeased when I left you. I was observing to Lord Alexander Beaulieu that, in my opinion, no man but a rich one should ever fall in love, or imagine himself to be so, with an heiress. I gave my reasons, and, why or wherefore, I cannot divine, he seemed as much disconcerted as if they were applied directly to himself," and Mr. Rhymer glanced somewhat maliciously from Lord Alexander to Miss Sydney.

"You are in error, if you supposed me to be displeased."

"So all angry men assert when they are piqued," remarked Mr. Rhymer; "but, while maintaining the fact of your being displeased, I am quite unconscious of the cause. Perhaps you would enlighten me?"

Lord Alexander affected not to hear him, and changed the subject, by observing that Sir Richard Elsmere had arrived at Rome the previous day.

"He will be an acquisition to society," said Lord Alexander, "for I know no one more *spirituel* and amusing."

"And probably few less estimable," observed Mr. Rhymer. "I have heard such instances of his want of heart, and his great selfishness, that I have always avoided cultivating his acquaintance."

"I do not see what right society has to find fault with a man's heart, or want of heart," replied Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "provided he is agreeable, well-bred, and adds to the *agrémens* of the

circle in which he finds himself. His wife or dependants are alone privileged to complain, if he is deficient in those qualities which constitute the happiness of domestic life, but to the world it ought to be a matter of indifference."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Rhymer. "Then you think that, provided a man is clever, polite, and witty, that is all which is required?"

"Yes, all that society requires; and I think also that, whatever may be the good qualities of the heart of an individual, if he is deficient in that amenity and good breeding on which the agreeability of society depends, he ought to be—and, I am glad to say, is — generally avoided."

Mr. Rhymer's countenance betrayed his consciousness that this last observation was aimed at him, and terrible was the glance of concentrated malice that he cast on Lord Alexander.

"I am glad, very glad, to hear *your* opinion on all subjects," said he, "and particularly on the requisites to render a man acceptable to society. You, who are so justly esteemed, must be an excellent judge of such a question."

"It must be acknowledged," observed Mrs. Sydney, desirous to change a topic that was becoming too personal, "that Sir Richard Elsmere can be very brilliant and entertaining. No one tells a story so well."

"Yes, so people say. All admit him to be a perfect *story-teller*," observed Mr. Rhymer, with one of his most sardonic smiles. "He can set the table in a roar too, I hear, when he thinks fit, in spite of the decent dignity that pervades good company; and this, I suppose, is the reason why he is so *recherché*, for his moral qualities certainly do not entitle him to respect, whatever his friend, Lord Alexander Beaulieu, may think."

"All I know is, that, after I have heard people proclaim that Elsmere has no heart, is selfish, and not peculiarly strict in his veracity, I have also heard them add—'but he is so agreeable! we must engage him to every dinner we wish to pass pleasantly;' while, when listening to commendations on the goodness of hearts of some other men, I have heard their commenders say, 'Oh, So-and-so has the best heart in the world; it is true; but he is so ill-natured and cynical, and so prone to say disagreeable things, that we must not invite him, lest he spoil our party.'"

Lord Alexander rose and took his leave when he had finished his last speech; and Mr. Rhymer, bursting with anger, called after him as he departed, saying, "I forgot to mention that the rich widow of

a London stockbroker, worth, they say, two plums, arrived last night at my hotel. I thought the intelligence might be interesting to you."

"I do not know why you should think so, but the good-nature of Mr. Rhymer is so proverbial, that no new proof of it ought to surprise me."

"He seemed by no means as grateful as might be expected," said Mr. Rhymer; "yet really the news is worth something to a man who has been for the last two years indefatigable in his pursuit of rich women, and who has proposed for so many, that he is known in London by the *sobriquet* of the Solicitor-general. The lady in question, too—I forget her vulgar name — looks to be precisely the sort of person likely to be caught by a lordling—ill-looking, overdressed, and self-important: never was there a more perfect picture of a City *parvenue*. 'Tell the fellow,' said she, in accents that smacked strongly of the sister country, 'that I wish to be driven all round the town to see the sights.' This speech was addressed to a woman who accompanied her, and who translated it into Italian to the *laquais de place*. Fancy a lady—if I may so far profane the term as to apply it to the person in question—attired in a crimson velvet cloak, trimmed with Russian sable, a velvet bonnet with feathers of the same colour, and a diamond *ferronnière* across a coarse, freckled forehead, which resembles nothing so much as the sunburnt knee of a kilted highlander."

"And this is the person you thought likely to interest Lord Alexander Beaulieu?" said Strathern.

"Whose *fortune* I thought likely to interest him; for, as money is all he thinks of in his matrimonial speculations, why should not the stockbroker's widow suit him as any other rich woman?"

"You are severe on him," said Mrs. Sydney.

"Not so much as he merits, I assure you; and, after all, I am only wishing to render him a service, by drawing his attention to this female Croesus. So many feathers, and so much velvet and fur, could never be displayed except with the intention of captivating; and as, according to the vulgar phrase, first come first served, I desired that Lord Alexander Beaulieu should lose no time in being presented to her. Who knows but he may become the successor of the deceased stockbroker!"

"I can't think so ill of Beaulieu," said Strathern, "as to believe that he would contract such an alliance."

"And I believe him capable of forming even a more objection-

able one for filthy lucre. The conduct of such men should be exposed, and particularly to ladies, who have not the same opportunities of becoming acquainted with the real characters of men that we have, who see examples every day how the plausibility of such fortune-hunters impose on the many."

Finding that Mr. Rhymer was determined to make a long visit, Strathern withdrew, not, it must be owned, without some fears that *he*, too, in his turn, would come in for the censure of the cynic, though unconscious of having done any thing to incur it. Mr. Rhymer, however, had no inclination to speak ill of him; *au contraire*, he entertained a good opinion of Strathern, as one of the few young men who treated him with respect; but even had he disliked him, he would on the present occasion have forborne to express it, lest, after his attack on Lord Alexander Beaulieu, the ladies might think him a universal speaker of evil.

"How do you like Mr. Strathern?" asked Mr. Rhymer, looking searchingly at Mrs. Sydney and her daughter while he asked the question.

"I think very highly of him," replied Mrs. Sydney.

"And you, fair lady, what do *you* say?"

"He seems amiable, and is sensible and agreeable," was the answer, but a bright blush which suffused the delicate cheek of the speaker convinced Mr. Rhymer that she spoke less highly of him than she felt.

"Seems! I know not seems. He *is* a very superior young man, I can assure you," resumed he. "I have known him from his boyhood, having continually met him during his vacations at poor Lord Argentyn's, who often dwelt on his numerous fine qualities to me. A proof that he had not overrated them is, that, notwithstanding the endeavours to spoil him made by a portion of designing husband-hunting persons of your sex, and the selfish, dupe-hunting portion of mine, he has committed himself neither with the one nor the other, and has equally steered clear of those flirtations with married women, into which so many men of his age are but too prone to fall on their first entering what is called fashionable life. Strathern is neither a gamester nor a keeper of race-horses, two rare merits in so young and so rich a man. He has but one defect that I know of- he is too good-looking—but perhaps you ladies may not consider that to be one," and he looked archly at the fair Louisa, who, at that moment, notwithstanding his abuse of Lord Alexander, was wondering how people could think

Mr. Rhymer was given to say ill-natured or disagreeable things.

"And so I find Lady Wellerby and her daughters are here, seeking whom they may (*not* devour, but entrap into a marriage," said Mr. Rhymer. "When people set traps," resumed he, "they shoul conceal them; but Lady Wellerby, and her young no, not *young*—ladies, let theirs be seen as plainly as the notices set up in parks and preserves in England, inscribed, 'beware of spring guns and man-traps set here,' and with the same effect, for most men avoid the snare."

"You are severe on Lady Wellerby," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"No, indeed: I am only honest enough to *say* what every one else *thinks*, but have not my *amiable franchise* to utter. That woman thinks of nothing on earth but getting her daughters married. She cares not whether the men be good or bad, invested with every virtue, or tainted by every vice—all she considers is that they be rich, and willing to make large settlements, and a thought of the future happiness of her daughters never enters her mind. She, finding her stupid lord very parsimonious, imagines that wealth, and a generous expenditure of it, constitute the real enjoyment of life, and if she can secure this for her daughters, she will believe she has well performed her maternal duties towards them."

"Are you going to Mrs. Vernon's party to-night?" said Mrs. Sydney, desirous of changing the subject.

"What, in Heaven's name, should I do there? Look on while the ladies at the card-table show their tempers, and not their good breeding? No, I avoid my whist-playing countrywomen as carefully as I eschew the gambling-houses in London, and for the same reason I dislike seeing the worst sides of human nature. You smile, Miss Sydney, and look incredulous; nevertheless, I do hate having the bad passions called into action in my presence, and, above all, in the persons of your sex, who certainly never appear to such disadvantage as at a card-table."

"But at Mrs. Vernon's you will find conversation as well as cards. The young people sing and play, and the elderly, who, like you and I, do not play cards, converse together."

"Were I sure that I could find a place near *you*, I should be disposed to go to Mrs. Vernon's, but as that might be difficult, if not impossible, I dare not venture. Fancy me fastened by Lady Henry Mortimer, and condemned to hear—for the hundredth time, at least—the history of her rheumatism. How it began, what she felt at its commencement, how she caught it, what the doctors said,

what she replied, with episodes on the cruelty of people in London who *will* fill their rooms to suffocation, and then open their windows to cool them, a process which she declares has caused all her sufferings. Or imagine me seated by Mrs. Osborn Henley, listening *bon gré mal gré* to the account of poor dear Mr. Osborn Henley's gout, and what he tried, and was recommended to try, for its cure, and what relieved, and what did not relieve him, and what she endures at witnessing his paroxysms, and how she fears that the warm mud baths of Italy, and the cold water at Gräfenberg, are equally inefficacious in the cure of gout, and her hopes that the malady is not hereditary. Or, if I escape these ladies, may I not be thrown by my evil stars into a chair near Lady Alicia Borrowdale, who will tell me of the surprising beauty of her eldest girl, now in her seventh year, the wonderful talent of her boy, who *was very near* getting the prize at school, last examination, and the delightful precocity of her last girl, who, though only two years and a half old, can say 'Pa-pa,' and 'Mam-ma,' *almost* plainly. No; I am better at home, with a book and my own thoughts, than in such parties, where my spleen is excited by the follies or vices of those I meet. But I have paid you an unconscionable visit, fair ladies, and will now release you, by saying farewell."

"He asserts that he hates having the bad passions called into action in his presence," said Louisa Sydney, "yet scruples not to lay bare the follies and *ridicules* of all his acquaintances. I wonder what he calls this propensity to censure? I should decidedly class it among the evil passions he denounces; and I think that playing cards, though a waste of time, and showing ill temper while doing so, betrays a want of good breeding, yet both are less blameable than the constant habit of exposing the errors of all persons he happens to encounter."

"Mr. Strathern was an exception; Mr. Rhymer did not attack him," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"As he spared no one else of whom he spoke, I hardly know whether his praise of Mr. Strathern is complimentary."

"You may be assured it is, Louisa, for never was Mr. Rhymer known to praise any one who was not remarkable for the possession of good qualities."

"I admit that he is clever and well-informed, and that he can make himself agreeable, but his ill-nature displeases me; and when I detect myself laughing at his bitter *mots*, I feel ashamed of myself."

"And you are right, my dear child, for it is the laughing at such ill-natured remarks that encourages persons to make them, who frequently only do so for the sake of amusing people, and showing their own talent."

A few days after the interview with Rhymer, at Mrs. Sydney's, Strathern sat in his room, musing on the fair Louisa, who now occupied all his thoughts, when he was disturbed by a visit from Lord Fitzwarren. Latterly he had seen much less of this young nobleman, whether from accident or design, he could not tell, and the truth was, he was too much pleased with the effect to examine into the cause.

"Strathern, I want you to do me a service," said Lord Fitzwarren. "Somehow or other, I don't think I gain ground with Miss Sydney. She grows more skittish and shy every day, so I want to bring her to the point, for it's no use losing my time in dancing attendance after her, is it?"

"I really think not," was the answer.

"Well, what I want you to do is, to sound her on the subject."

"Do you mean me to propose to her for you?"

"No, not quite that, but I wish to avoid the double annoyance of being refused, and having to pay that d——d fellow, Axy Beaulieu, five hundred. You can just ask, in the course of conversation, what she thinks of me, and discover whether a proposal from me would be likely to be accepted or not."

"I really could not put such a question, Fitzwarren, and even if I could, it would not be a fair way of getting out of your bet."

"It was a deuced stupid wager to make, and I now wish I had let it alone; but who the devil could have dreamt that a young fellow with forty thousand a year, and not worse-looking than his neighbours (and Fitzwarren stole a look at himself in the opposite mirror), would be treated as coolly as I have been by Miss Sydney? Why, there's the Wellerby girls, and I begin to think they are not so much amiss, they'd jump at me if I was to make either of them an offer. Devilish good-natured creatures they are, too, for now that they know that I am hard hit with Miss Sydney, and suppose that I am to marry her, they are just as civil to me as they were before, when I used to fancy that all their civility arose from their hopes of catching me. Why, Olivia is never tired of listening to me, when I tell her about my stud, and asks me a thousand questions relative to them. She's a devilish sensible girl, I can tell you, and understands the points of a horse remarkably well. I found

her the other day copying a plaster cast of a nag, and very well she did it, by Jove! and she said she only wished she had a living model to copy. Yes; and the sister, Sophy, too, is a deuced good sort of girl. And when, the other morning, the Melbrook girls were saying that they saw nothing so remarkable in Miss Sydney, Sophy immediately took up arms for her - yes, by Jove! she did—and swore—no, she did *not* swear, she only asserted—that Miss Sydney was the most perfect beauty she ever saw, and Olivia joined in, and said that Miss Sydney was not a bit vain or conceited, though she is so beautiful. Now, I call that devilish good-natured, and it made me like the Wellerby girls better than I ever thought I should!"

Strathern could not suppress a smile at the simplicity of Fitzwarren, who notwithstanding his declared *tendresse* for Miss Sydney, seemed well disposed to be consoled for any disappointment, in engaging her esteem, by the flatteries of two young ladies, whom, a short time before, he regarded with a sentiment nearer approaching to dislike than good-will.

"What would you advise me to do, Strathern?" asked Fitzwarren. "I can't bear letting that fellow Beaulieu win my money."

"But I don't see how you can avoid it; for, if you do not propose, he will consider the wager forfeited; and if you do, the chances are you will be refused; so in either case you will lose."

"By Jove, it's a puzzling case! is it not? If I don't propose, it's like letting his horse walk over the course; and if I do, I am sure to be distanced. Neither are pleasant. But, hang me! I prefer paying Axy Beaulieu, without subjecting myself to the annoyance of a rejection, which will be blazed all over Rome, and having the Wellerby girls and all the rest of the set know that I was refused, which always makes a man look so devilish foolish. Yes, I'll pay the five hundred, and have an end of it."

And away went Lord Fitzwarren, with the air of a man whose mind is relieved by having come to a fixed decision.

Two days after Lord Fitzwarren had paid the forfeited wager to Lord Alexander Beaulieu, the latter wrote a studied epistle to Mrs. Sydney, enclosing one for her daughter, in which he laid himself (fortune he had little to offer) at her feet, as he phrased it. Mrs. Sydney was never more surprised than when she received his letter, but the young lady was even more astonished. Certain as she felt that she had never given him the least encouragement, she could not acquit him of betraying a very unusual degree of vanity

and self-confidence, in thus, on so slight an acquaintance, venturing to make such a proposal.

"You see, mother, that it is not without reason that I treat the younger portion of our male acquaintance with such reserve," said Louisa, "when, even in spite of my coldness to them, I am thus assailed. Who would be an heiress, to be tormented by every designing fortune-hunter one encounters—men, whom no coldness can repel, no disdain make sensible of the utter hopelessness of their addresses ever being made acceptable!"

"These proposals annoy me more than I can tell you, my dear child, because I fear they will have the evil effect of confirming in you the belief I have taken such pains to eradicate. Be assured that, although some men may be influenced wholly by mercenary motives in seeking to win a young woman of large fortune, *all* are not so base, and you will injure, if not destroy, your own chance of happiness by indulging such suspicions. Fancy how a high-minded and disinterested man, who loved you for yourself alone, would feel wounded and insulted if he found himself confounded with the mercenary herd who flock around an heiress."

Mrs. Sydney's thoughts were on Strathern as she spoke. With all the quickness peculiar to fond mothers, she saw from the first that he admired her daughter, and hoped his admiration would, on acquaintance, ripen into a deeper sentiment. She had marked, with pain, the chilling reserve with which Louisa met his advances towards a more familiar intercourse than was permitted to the other young men who sought to make themselves agreeable to her, and was grieved that no distinction was made between him so really deserving of favour, and those who had so much less claim to it.

With a thousand fine qualities, Louisa Sydney had one defect, and that was more an acquired than a natural one. It was suspicion, engendered by a sensibility, a *besoin d'être aimé*, and loved for herself alone, that made her doubt whether the circumstance of her being an heiress might not shut her out for ever from this blessing. With a little vanity, and self-confidence in her own charms, this painful doubt might never have entered her mind; but Louisa was a proud, not a vain, woman, and her pride, no less than her feminine delicacy, revolted at the notion of being regarded only as one to be courted for her wealth. In short, the woman was jealous of the heiress, and gladly would she have resigned her splendid fortune for a competency that would preclude the possibility of

suspicion of her being wooed for her gold. Her mother was too fondly attached to her, and had studied her character too well, not to have observed this defect, and not to have used every exertion to vanquish it. Her efforts might have been more successful, had not the crowd of suitors who flocked around the heiress confirmed her in her suspicion. Hence the reserve and chilling coldness, adopted by her towards her admirers, and which, in the case of several of them, as well as in that of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, having failed to prevent their pushing their presumption so far as to demand her hand, only served to confirm her doubts.

Often was Mrs. Sydney on the point of expressing her high opinion of Strathern, and of pointing out that *he*, at least, could never be suspected of mercenary motives, his own large fortune exempting him from any necessity for such. A moment's reflection, however, taught her that it was wiser to let her daughter learn from others the position filled by Strathern in his own country, and the high estimation in which he was held by all whose opinions were valuable, than to have the air of forcing Louisa's attention towards him.

Mrs. Sydney's wedded life had been one of unbroken happiness, as far as regarded the mutual affection, which had never known a change, between her and her excellent husband. Married in her seventeenth year, she became the joyful mother of a son ere she had numbered her eighteenth, an event which, if possible, increased the affection of Mr. Sydney. Two years after she gave birth to Louisa, and from that period her felicity had been uninterrupted, until the sudden death of her husband, occasioned by the bursting of his gun when out shooting, made a fatal breach in it. The fond wife was walking towards a wood, where she knew he was enjoying the sports of the field, when she met the procession bearing his lifeless body to his late happy home. The shock nearly destroyed her, and for many months her life was despaired of! Time, that worker of miracles, that only healer of broken hearts, achieved its usual conquest over hers. Religion, and her love for her children, led her to endeavour to forget "that such things were, and were most sweet," as a doting husband who sympathised in her tastes, who shared her joys, who made her life a continued scene of happiness, and with whom she looked forward to descend into the vale of years, still cherished and cared for, until at last they should sink into the grave together—all this happiness had fled for ever: all these hopes had vanished; yet she must live

on until it pleased the Almighty to reunite her to *him*, so fondly loved, so deeply mourned. She must dwell in the abode where *they* had been so blest; must behold his vacant chair, must weep over the pillow on which his dear head reposed, and must look forward to see hours, days, weeks, months, and years roll away in dreary, hopeless widowhood. She vowed never to give him a successor in her affections, henceforth to be devoted wholly to her children; and well did she keep her determination, although, in after-years, many had been the attempts made to induce her to change it. Still young, handsome, and rich, people could not understand why Mrs. Sydney refused so many of what are called unexceptionable offers. Her neighbours foretold that she would not always remain so inexorable; but, as year after year passed away, they began to think they had been wrong in their predictions, and shook their heads, and hoped her children would repay her for the sacrifice she had made for their sakes. But, in rejecting all matrimonial overtures, Mrs. Sydney had not made any sacrifice. Her heart could know no second love, and, true to the memory of the first, she shrunk from the very thoughts of another marriage, or of giving a step-father to her children. Her son, in whom she traced the image of his lost parent, as well as many of his fine and noble qualities, had only reached his fifteenth year, when a brain-fever put a period to his existence. Who shall paint the anguish of the doting and bereaved mother at this cruel blow! The deep wound inflicted twelve years before seemed to open and bleed afresh at this new and terrible stroke of affliction. Her health suffered so severely that her physicians ordered her to remove into a warmer climate, and she and her daughter, then in her thirteenth year, went to pass the winter in Italy.

It was fortunate for Mrs. Sydney that in the unceasing care and attention bestowed on her daughter's education her mind was drawn away from the continual contemplation of the causes of sorrow she had endured. She felt the necessity of occupation, and some strong and engrossing interest, to keep her from dwelling too much on the past: and with this conviction she parted from the governess who had hitherto assisted her in the education of Louisa, and devoted herself wholly to the task. It required no little exertion of self-control to abide by this wise resolution, as all who have experienced grief will acknowledge; for there is a positive fascination in the indulgence of sorrow, which it is most difficult to break through, and many a fine intellect has been impaired by its influence.

It seems like infidelity towards the dear departed to find consolation for his loss, and his memory is cherished with a fondness that renders the mourner more prone to look back to the happier past, when blessed with his presence, than patiently to support the actual present, or anticipate the dreary future.

The duty she had undertaken was one not to be neglected, and often did the devoted mother rise after a sleepless night from her tear-stained pillow, to give her morning lessons to her daughter, when one with a less firm sense of the importance of the task she had undertaken would have resigned herself to the selfish indulgence of regret. This courageous exertion in time brought its own reward. Mrs. Sydney gradually, though slowly, recovered her peace of mind; and, while instilling those principles into the ductile one of Louisa which had formed her own best consolation under the trials with which it had pleased the Almighy to afflict her, she felt she was laying the surest foundation for the future happiness of her child.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Beware suspicion—let it not intrude
Into thy breast; 'twill poison all thy joys,
And tear asunder every tender tie
That love and friendship form to sweeten life."

The change of climate proved so salutary to the health of Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, that, although the former would have wished to return and establish herself altogether in England, she still continued so delicate that she was only able to remain in her native country during the summer months, which she made it a point of duty to do; but, though absent from home in the inclement season, the poor there were not forgotten, and her charities, administered through the hands of the rector of the parish and his excellent wife, flowed as liberally and constantly as if the kind donor were not absent.

The death of her brother rendered Louisa Sydney the heiress to a very large estate (charged only with four thousand a year to her mother) and a considerable sum in the funds, which, owing to the long minority, increased yearly. Mrs. Sydney feared that these

possessions, however they might add to the importance of her daughter in a worldly point of view, were not calculated to insure her chance of happiness; for she, like many unambitious and kind-hearted mothers, thought more of seeing her child happily than greatly wedded, and trembled lest her high-minded and lovely daughter might become the prey of some mercenary man of fashion urged to repair his broken fortune by her splendid one. While guarding against the chance of such a misfortune, Mrs. Sydney felt the necessity of preventing, if possible, the mind of her daughter from imbibing any of the suspicions so apt to be engendered, while adopting the caution dictated by prudence. Unfortunately, however, an old and faithful servant, who had never left the family since she had performed the functions of nurse to Mr. Sydney, who had been placed about the person of his daughter from her birth, and who now enacted the part of *femme de chambre* to that young lady, defeated the desire and care of Mrs. Sydney on this point.

Mrs. Murray, for so was the nurse called, loved her young lady almost to idolatry, and believed she was giving an excellent proof of her attachment when she was instilling into her pure and artless mind suspicions that never else could have found entrance there. She would dwell with never-tiring energy on the dangers to which heiresses were exposed from the selfish and the designing, and the little chance there existed of even the fairest amongst that doomed class ever being loved for herself. She would sigh, nay, even weep, as she poured into the guileless ear of Louisa narratives founded on the fates of the heiresses who, as she related, had been lured into marriage by some gay deceiver, who feigned a flame never felt, and who, when the fatal knot was tied with the tongue which could not be untied by the teeth, threw off the mask, and tyrannized over the unhappy dupe he had made, lavishing her fortune in the indulgence of his own selfish pleasures and vices, and leaving her a victim to his neglect.

Such tales, often repeated, sunk deep into the breast of Louisa Sidney; yet her generous nature struggled against the suspicions instilled into her ear by the nurse, and often prompted her to doubt that men could be so base, or that *all* heiresses could be doomed to such fates as those recorded by her "good Murray;" and she would say—

"But there surely must be exceptions. A poor man might love without mercenary motives, and men who have large and unim-

paired fortunes of their own might love and wed a rich woman without any view to her wealth."

"Alas! no, my dear young lady; poor men are ever swayed by the desire of wealth, and even the rich seek riches as ardently as do the impoverished; and the most beautiful ladies, when they are heiresses, find, when too late, that they are never loved for themselves."

Such impressions, conveyed while the ductile mind of Louisa was most susceptible of receiving indelible ones, and while her reason was not sufficiently matured to repel them, produced precisely the effect which her mother most dreaded. She became cold, reserved, and guarded. With a thousand generous and noble feelings in her own breast, which might have taught her to believe in the existence of similar ones in the hearts of others, she saw in every man who sought to please her a mercenary suitor who thought only of her wealth, and she spurned the homage which she supposed to be based on such unworthy motives.

Mrs. Sydney discovered, with deep regret and surprise, the impression made on the mind of her daughter; but the discovery was, alas! made when too late wholly to eradicate the error. She decided, after much reflection bestowed on the subject, that it would be wiser to let time work its gradual influence in removing this defect than by dwelling on it, by argument, perhaps to increase it; for the fond mother was not so far blinded by maternal love as to be insensible to the fact that a spice of obstinacy sometimes exhibited itself in the character of her dear Louisa, betrayed more through a pertinacity in retaining her opinions than a courageousness in defending them. She hoped much from the effect to be produced by the personal qualities of the suitor who should first captivate her daughter's heart; and with this hope she soothed her own mind, and left unruffled that of Louisa by not referring to the topic.

Mrs. Sydney was naturally rather of an indolent disposition, the result, probably, of a languid temperament, and delicate health, which, requiring quiet and repose, induced a careful avoidance of all that would militate against the enjoyment of those blessings. Hence, her daughter early learned to emancipate herself from all mental restraint with regard to her opinions, although her tender affection for and obedience to her mild and amiable mother precluded the possibility of her entering into any thing like discussions with her parent, who, experiencing from her

child an invariable and affectionate attention, little suspected that on one point their sentiments and opinions were wholly opposed. Open as day, and full of confidence in the worthiness of others, Mrs. Sydney's was a nature that, knowing no guile, suspected none. And such, probably, would Louisa have been, had not the narrow-minded but well-intentioned Murray infused suspicions into her youthful breast; and, although the natural nobleness and generosity of her heart sometimes triumphed over this acquired defect, it at others exerted a sway, the evidence of which pained and displeased her mother.

Many as were the admirers which the beauty and talents of her daughter attracted around her, Strathern was the only one whom Mrs. Sydney deemed worthy to aspire to the possession of her hand, or whom she thought calculated to remove the suspicion, which she now but too plainly saw had crept into Louisa's mind, of the mercenary views of those who sought to please her. His character had borne the inquiries she had made, and his taste and acquirements led her to believe that he, who had at so early an age developed such fine qualities, and avoided the follies and vices into which so many of his contemporaries had recklessly plunged, could not fail to become a distinguished member of society, and a man into whose care the happiness of a youthful and beautiful woman could be safely confided. With this conviction, she had noticed with pleasure his admiration of her daughter, before Louisa herself had remarked it, but she carefully abstained from revealing her thoughts on this subject to her, lest she should awaken the suspicions to which every new admirer was subjected, before time had been given to Strathern to make the favourable impression which would combat them. Mrs. Sydney, therefore, was always ready to welcome and converse with him, while Louisa sat apart, pursuing her avocations of painting or embroidering as if he were not present, and only dropping in a few words in the animated conversation going on, when appealed to by either of the interlocutors engaged in it. But though nearly a silent listener, she was not an unmindful one. The justice and high-mindedness of Strathern's sentiments, drawn out by her mother's remarks, rather than spontaneously displayed, struck and pleased her, and she would sometimes express a dissent from their opinions, merely for the pleasure of being refuted by him, who possessed the happy art of convincing the reason, without ever alarming the *amour-propre* of those with whom he differed. If Strathern asked permission to look at the

drawing on which she was engaged, she was surprised to hear him, unlike all her other male acquaintance, point out some defects, and suggest an improvement, while they could only discover perfections, and express the most exaggerated praise. Nevertheless, though the progress Strathern was making in her esteem was sure, it was slow, so slow that he was often tempted to abandon the pursuit, which held forth so little prospect of being crowned with ultimate success; but so strong was the power which this lovely creature exercised over him, that he could not tear himself from her presence.

Nor would Louisa have seen him depart without feelings of regret never previously experienced by her for the absence of any of his sex. She had grown to expect him at a certain hour, to know his footstep, and to feel her heart beat quicker at his approach; and though she would have died rather than that *he* should learn the state of her feelings, or that her mother should divine them, she was conscious that they originated not in a mere girlish fancy, and that it would be no easy task for her to subdue them, if, on a more intimate acquaintance, such a measure should be found necessary.

It has been said that the feelings of queens born to reign—not queen-consorts—differ in many respects from those of other women, and in none so much as in the doubts and fears experienced when first they feel the tender passion. Accustomed to empire, they are disposed to be impatient when made sensible that *they*, who hitherto had influenced the destinies of those around them, are now dependant for happiness on another—that *other*, perhaps, not always so smitten by the attractions of the woman as dazzled by the rank of the queen. How many anxieties and fears are such a position calculated to excite, each poisoning the first sense of enjoyment which love awakens in a youthful breast! Heiresses to great fortunes may be likened to queens in this respect, and the very wealth so desired and envied, and which can confer so many gratifications, exempts them from the pure and unalloyed happiness reserved to the portionless maiden, who feels secure that she is chosen and loved for herself alone.

"I will closely observe him, learn to know his real character and disposition," said Louisa Sidney to herself in the privacy of her chamber; "and if I find them all that I could wish, and that myself, and not my fortune, is the object which attracts him, then will I permit him to see that I am not indifferent to his attentions."

But then came the doubt whether these attentions were directed

to *her*, and whether they were not wholly paid to her mother; and this doubt inflicted a pang.

"Mamma is still very handsome," said Louisa, and she sighed while she made the admission; "and she is not yet too old to inspire the tender passion," and she sighed still more deeply. "She is considerably younger than Lady L. or Lady M., who still hold hearts captive. What if he should be in love with *her*, while I, vain fool as I have been, was imagining that he only played the agreeable to her in order to conciliate me! Yes, it is, it must be so."

And a new pang made itself felt in the breast of Louisa, as she retraced the long and interesting conversations and the animated looks and smiles which took place almost daily between her mother and Strathern. These thoughts preyed on her mind, and gave a pensive air to her countenance as she entered the breakfast-room, with cheeks unusually pallid, the morning after this alarming doubt had first presented itself to her imagination. She caught herself frequently, during the matinal repast, looking at her mother; and, as she marked the smoothness and delicacy of her face, the brilliancy of her eyes, the silken texture and luxuriance of her hair, and the whiteness of her teeth, she admitted to herself that it was nothing strange that such a woman should still achieve conquests.

"But *he* is so young," thought Louisa, "that a preference, which in a man of a similar age to mamma's might seem natural enough, in *him* appears somewhat extraordinary, more especially when a daughter of my years"—and for the moment she was disposed to think herself arrived at very mature ones—"is present to remind him of the disparity that exists between him and the object of his *tendresse*."

"You are thoughtful to-day, dearest," said Mrs. Sydney.

"Am I, mamma! I was not aware of it;" and a rosy blush betrayed the disingenuousness of this speech.

"I begin to think you are tired of Rome, Louisa, and if so, I am ready to leave it when you like."

"No, mamma, I assure you I am not at all tired of Rome; *au contraire*, I prefer it to all other parts of Italy. I like its grave aspect, its ruins, its matchless Vatican, and its glorious St. Peter's. I dislike nothing in the Eternal City but the balls, dinners, and *soirées* introduced into it by our compatriots, who seem to forget they are not in London, and pursue the same dull and heartless round, of what they misname pleasure, that they follow there."

"You are becoming quite a philosopher, dearest: but, to confess

the truth, I, too, disapprove of the plan adopted by the English, of leading precisely the same mode of existence in a city calculated to awaken such serious reflections as this does, as they pursue during the saturnalia of a London season, when, emerging from what they call the dull routine of a country life, they plunge into the gaieties of the metropolis. To get partners to make up their rubbers at whist seems to be the whole object of ladies of a certain age, as to secure partners for life is the sole aim of the young ones. These objects I should think might be more easily accomplished at home, and it does appear very incongruous to see persons so insensible to the scene around them."

"Thank Heaven, however, you, mamma, are not a card-player, and I am not a husband-hunter!"

"I hardly know whether I ought to rejoice in my ignorance of card-playing, Louisa, for it frequently exposes me to sour looks and angry tosses of the head when a person is required to make up a rubber, and I declare my incapacity to do so. It was only three nights ago that I overheard Lady Melderton observe that 'those who did not play cards had no business at parties, and that she supposed it was the desire to appear young that induced some people,' and she glanced rather spitefully at me, 'to decline playing.'"

"What an ill-natured woman!" said Louisa.

"No, not precisely ill-natured—only selfish, and angry when her own pleasures are interrupted. Cards are her sole amusement, and she cannot pardon any one who is not ready to assist in furnishing it."

"What surprises me," observed Louisa, "is that persons can find pleasure in what occasions such frequent loss of temper. Only look at Lady Melderton when she loses; her face, handsome as it is at other times, becomes perfectly disagreeable then. She gets red and pale by turns, her eyes grow eager, her mouth becomes pinched, her cheeks elongated, and her hands twitch—in short, one glance at her ought to cure any woman of this unfeminine passion for play."

"You forget, my dear, that people always sit down with the hope of winning, and even the ill-tempered are in good humour while they win."

"I really don't know, mamma, whether the triumph which, however they endeavour to conceal it, always betrays itself in their countenances when they win, is not more disagreeable to witness than their unrepressed anger when they lose. No, I shall never be a card-player."

"So has many a person at your age said, my dear Louisa; but in after years they have changed their opinions. When age comes on, bringing with it the infirmities inseparable from a protracted state of existence, and when the spirits fail, and the sight fades, a rubber of whist has often been found a resource for passing the long winter evenings, which, without it, might have hung heavily on those too languid for conversation."

"And the old are privileged to play at cards provided they do so in moderation, that it is not made the business of their lives, and that they do not stake large sums on the game. But how unwise it is in the young, or even in the middle-aged, while yet in the possession of health and good spirits, to anticipate this resource of the aged, and to devote their evenings to cards! It seems to me quite incomprehensible."

"And certainly is highly reprehensible. But idleness, that bane of life, and the desire for excitement lead many to the card-table. I remember hearing a professed gamester once assert that play was as necessary to him as food and raiment; and that even the excitement attendant on losing was preferable to the stagnation of mind peculiar to the hours not spent in gambling."

"In what a perverted state the mind of the person making such an acknowledgment must be, and with so many sources of pure and rational enjoyment as this world affords to those possessed of a competency! To me it appears that the contemplation of nature, the beautiful skies, the verdant earth, and all that adorns it; the boundless and sublime sea, the clear and sparkling lakes and rivers, are pregnant with inexhaustible delight. Then the vast mine of literature, open to those who seek its enduring pleasures, the study of the fine arts and sciences which yield such untiring interest to those who can appreciate them! How, with such resources for happily filling up every hour, can persons seek the card-table to kill time?"

"The baleful influence of bad example engenders, and habit fixes, this dangerous and engrossing vice, the indulgence in which unfits its votaries for better, nobler things, and has led to the destruction of many aristocratic families. How many men have I known who commenced life with the most brilliant prospects, yet, by play, ere they had reached maturity, had plunged themselves and those dear to them in inextricable ruin! Of all infatuations this is to me the most inexplicable, and of all vices it is the one I most dread, because it is as destructive to those who plunge into

it as the North Sea is said to be to the vessels lost in it, of which not even a portion of the wrecks is ever again seen. Of the virtues wrecked in gaming, how few traces remain! All, all are engulphed, and yet no one takes warning by the fearful examples so often furnished to them; and every year beholds fortune, fame, and peace, sacrificed at this shrine of Mammon."

"I will never marry a man who does not hold play, in as great abhorrence as you do, dearest mother," said Louisa Sydney, gravely; and Mrs. Sydney heard the determination with satifaction.

Though deeply offended, and mortified at being repulsed by Miss Sydney, Lord Alexander Beaulieu did not discontinue his visits to her. He had two motives in pursuing this line of conduct—the first was to avoid its being known that he had been rejected by that young lady, a fact which he was most anxious should be concealed, and which a cessation of his visits to her would lead people to guess; and the second, a scheme which had entered his head, of trying whether his matrimonial projects, if directed towards her mother, might not prove more successful. He now paid the most assiduous court to Mrs. Sydney, offering her his arm on every occasion; hovering near her wherever she appeared, and only just showed that degree of placid and respectful politeness to her lovely daughter to which every lady in society is entitled. As neither mother nor daughter ever gave the slightest hint of his having proposed for the latter, and, as he was most careful never to betray the least intimation on the subject, the fact was wholly unknown to the circle in which both parties moved, and was only suspected by Strathern, whose lover-like, quick perception had marked the previous attentions of Lord Alexander Beaulieu to Miss Sydney, and, noticing their cessation, judged how the case really stood. This sudden transfer of his assiduities from the young lady to her mother did not serve to elevate him in the opinion of Strathern, who felt positively annoyed that a woman, in every way so superior as Mrs. Sydney, should be selected for the dupe of the mercenary young man, while she, unsuspicious of his motives, extended to him the same politeness shared by all her acquaintance. Louisa observed, with a contempt, the symptoms of which she was at little pains to conceal, the indelicate conduct of her late suitor, and only wondered that her mother saw not the cause which actuated it. But, the truth was, Mrs. Sydney considered herself so wholly out of the reach of flirtations or courtships, that a notion of any man,

and more especially a young man who had aspired to her daughters's hand, forming views relative to herself never for a moment entered her head.

This new proof of the baseness to which money can tempt its worshippers to descend strengthened Louisa in the bad opinion she entertained of mankind, and induced an increased coldness on her part, not only to the unworthy portion of it, but to those wholly exempt from the selfish calculation which so strongly excited her disgust. Strathern marked with pain the change in her manner, and, ignorant of the real cause, was tempted to attribute it to caprice, a failing it grieved him to discover in one he had deemed so faultless. The annoyance visible in his demeanour was not unnoticed by Louisa, who erroneously imagined that it originated in jealousy at the attention paid by Lord Alexander Beaulieu to her mother; and this supposition did not serve to increase her happiness. She observed the look of displeasure with which Strathern regarded his supposed rival, when, as was often the case, he found him occupying the seat by Mrs. Sydney which he had formerly been wont to fill, and this confirmed her suspicions. Yet, painful as were the feelings they excited, they produced one unexpected result. Now that she could no longer imagine that Strathern had any views with regard to herself, it was unnecessary to maintain the reserve towards him hitherto observed; and, while Lord Alexander Beaulieu addressed his conversation wholly to Mrs. Sydney, her daughter would occasionally talk to Strathern, until, by degrees, not only did her stately coldness fade away, as snow melts before the genial influence of sunbeams, but she forgot, or ceased to indulge, any of the suspicions that had lately crossed her mind. Mrs. Sydney noticed with pleasure the intimacy thus slowly but securely forming between her daughter and the only man she had hitherto seen to whom she could have willingly entrusted her fate, and, desirous to have them more thrown together, she bore with patience the engrossing attentions of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, which tended to effect this point, by rendering it in some degree incumbent on Louisa to converse with Strathern while she talked with the other.

Encouraged by Mrs. Sydney's politeness, which his preposterous vanity led him to attribute to a more tender sentiment, Lord Alexander Beaulieu now thought it time to make to the mother the same declaration of love he had only a few weeks previously offered to the daughter, and, as on the former occasion, he did this by

letter. Seldom had Mrs. Sydney experienced a feeling so nearly akin to anger as when she perused his epistle, but this feeling merged into contempt at the unblushing impudence with which the writer presumed to avow a flame for her, so soon after having professed the most ardent passion for Louisa. She accused herself for having hitherto treated Lord Alexander Beaulieu with an indulgence, which, though meant only to soothe his disappointment at the rejection of her daughter, he had evidently mistaken for an encouragement of his views towards herself, and she wrote him a refusal in terms so cold and stately as to leave him no hope that even the continuance of his acquaintance would in future be agreeable to her. That something had occurred to ruffle the usual equanimity of her mother Louisa soon became aware, although Mrs. Sydney forbore to name the subject. The truth was, she felt ashamed to let her daughter know that so great a liberty had been taken with her, as she considered the proposal made as nothing short of an insult offered. But when several days passed, and Lord Alexander Beaulieu appeared no more in their *salon*, and evidently avoided them when they met elsewhere, the truth flashed on the mind of Louisa, and she ventured to hint at it to her mother.

"Don't let us speak of him, dearest," said Mrs. Sydney, her cheeks growing red with anger. "He is a vain, foolish man, and I have signified to him that his visits are not any longer acceptable here."

The rage of the discarded suitor knew no bounds. What! to be refused by a woman twelve years at least his senior, and with a grown daughter too! It was too vexatious!—and he promised himself that, if an occasion ever offered, he would wreak his vengeance on both mother and daughter for the double disappointment they had given him. He had already, in his mind's eye, appropriated to his own use the large jointure of Mrs. Sydney, calculated the probable accumulation from the savings so prudent a woman must have made, and questioned even the chance of acquiring some advantage from the noble fortune of her daughter, when she should become *his* daughter-in-law. And now, all these bright visions faded, and he found himself with little more than half the five hundred so fortunately won from Lord Fitzwarren—the rest having gone to pay his bills at Rome—to carry on the war, as he termed it, for the next year, before the expiration of which he could not venture to return to England, his elder brother having only assisted him with a loan on those terms, while he temporised with his numerous and

impatient creditors at home. What was to be done? The rejection of Mrs. Sydney would be guessed at, if not revealed by her, owing to his no longer being seen in attendance on her, and he should get laughed at and ridiculed by his *clique*, on the members of which his own powers of ridicule had been so often and unsparingly tried that they would rejoice in an opportunity of avenging themselves, and show him no mercy. Something must be done before his rejection became known, and he turned over in his mind what that something must be. After serious consideration, and mature deliberation, as the old story says, he determined, as the best mode of silencing any dreaded report, on offering his homage to some other lady; but who that lady was to be became the next point to be determined upon. There was then, unhappily, no other heiress at Rome, nor even a rich widow, to indemnify him for his late disappointments. He rubbed his brow as he pondered over the different unmarried women in society, and exclaimed, "No; there is not one with money." At that instant a noise in the street attracted him to the window, and he saw the carriage of Mrs. Maclaurin, the widow of the rich stockbroker, driven past. Like lightning, the notion of transferring his views flashed through his mind. She was not young, was ugly, and vulgar, it was true—but she was rich, immensely rich, and wealth, in his opinion, atoned for every defect. Yes, he would pay his court to Mrs. Maclaurin immediately, and so have the air of quitting, instead of being quitted by the Sydneys. But how was he to become acquainted with this lady? Ay! here was the difficulty. In the circle in which he moved she was not admitted, and he knew not a single person who could present him to her. A new plan occurred to him. He would change his lodging, take up his abode in the hotel in which she resided, and seek some mode, however irregular and unceremonious, of introducing himself to her, and, *comme ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*, that once accomplished, he doubted not that the result would be perfectly satisfactory to his wishes.

While shrinking in alarm from the bare notion of being held up to the ridicule of the society in which he moved, Lord Alexander Beaulieu hesitated not to plot and scheme how best to carry into execution his mean and mercenary views on the vulgar widow of the stockbroker, convinced that, if he succeeded in gaining possession of her fortune, he might defy, such is the power of wealth, the ill-natured comments likely to be made on such a *mésalliance*. He was sufficiently well acquainted with the fashionable world, the only

one whose suffrage he valued, or to whose opinions he referred, not to be well aware that riches, however acquired, could always obtain for their possessor toleration, if not consideration in it. To be sure, the fastidious portion of his acquaintance might smile in derision of the ugly and vulgar woman he wished to make his bride, and for a short time look coldly on him for having selected such a one; but the splendour of his *fêtes*, and the frequency of the *recherchés* dinners he meant to give, would soon silence their censures, for he knew by experience that, of all means of stopping the mouths of his fashionable *soi-disant* friends, good dinners, often repeated, were the most effectual.

Thus did Lord Alexander Beaulieu, the man of fashion, the man of the world, reason; and so would many a one of his acquaintance reason too, for there are but too many in the circles to which they belong, who, while shrinking from ridicule, are ready to commit any meanness that can tend to accomplish the projects they have in view. This dread of ridicule, and carelessness of incurring well-merited censure, is the result of the actual state of society in certain classes, where money, like charity, is supposed to cover a multitude of sins, and where the world's dread laugh is much more feared than the stings of conscience, or even the divine anger. Marrying for money is so common an event in the present day, that it is not only tolerated, but reckoned praiseworthy; hence, men of good family, but with small fortunes, consider themselves as marketable commodities, to be disposed of to the highest bidder, and speculate on all their imagined or real advantages to enhance their pretensions. Of all the mercenary herd who might be found in the circles of fashion, not one entertained a higher opinion of himself than did Lord Alexander Beaulieu, yet this inordinate self-admiration was accompanied by so little self-respect that he was willing to barter his person and name for a fortune, wholly regardless how plain, vulgar, and illiterate the woman might be, by a marriage with whom it was to be acquired. He would have, doubtlessly, preferred wedding a young and beautiful girl of good family and large fortune, like Miss Sydney, had she smiled on his suit, or even her mother, had she deigned to accept his proposal; but, as neither were to be won, and no other rich women of good family were at Rome, he was determined to try his fortune with the stockbroker's widow.

## CHAPTER VIII.

For husbands ever on the watch,
Like spiders trying flies to catch,
They spread their nets, and, when too late,
The victim struggles with his fate.
Unhappy wretch! for aye condemned
To drag a chain he cannot rend,
And tread the cheerless path of life,
Encumber'd with a heartless wife.

The advice given by Lady Wellerby to her daughters had been strictly followed by them, and so advantageous had been its effects, that from the time that Lord Fitzwarren had, in utter despair of success, abandoned his pursuit of Miss Sydney, he had fallen into the habit of dropping in, *sans cérémonie*, at Lady Wellerby's for the purpose, as he termed it, of killing time, by chatting with her daughters. It was not that he really felt any pleasure in their society, or experienced the least preference for them, that he thus paid his daily visits, but the truth was, he knew not how otherwise to get rid of the hours that hung so heavily on his hands, and sought the Wellerbys as his only refuge from being left to his own resources, which were but feeble, against the enemy he most dreaded—*ennui*. Had there been a horse-dealer of any celebrity at Rome, or a club where he could have met some of his acquaintances, who, like himself, had no pleasure in antiquities or works of art, never would he have frequented Lady Wellerby's; as it was, he became a daily visiter there. To a weak man, habit is a dangerous thing. It renders supportable objects which, previously to its being contracted, were not only viewed by him with indifference but even with dislike, and, like the use of snuff or tobacco, from which persons at first recoil, after some time habit makes those formely disapproved not only endurable, but agreeable. In these daily visits of Lord Fitzwarren to Lady Wellerby, the young ladies were wont to continue their avocations unrestrained by his presence—nay, more, they selected those in which he seemed disposed to take some interest. Lady Olivia affected to take a sudden passion for drawing horses, and her sister wasted many sheets of paper

in endeavouring to cut out something in the shape of those animals.

"Well done, by Jove!—a capital attempt," said Lord Fitzwarren, as, seated by the girls, he one day looked over a drawing on which Lady Olivia was engaged. "Yes, you have a real genius for drawing horses, and, when I can find a fine, thorough-bred, English nag, I will buy it at any price, that you may have a good model to copy."

"Will you, indeed? How kind of you, and how much obliged to you I shall feel! I always had a passion for horses, but until *you* taught me to distinguish and appreciate the really good ones, I had no power of drawing them. Now I feel that if you will but have patience with me, and continue your instructions, I shall soon be able to render justice to the noble animal."

"The back is somewhat too long—shorten it; make the legs less thin, for though fine legs are a beauty in a horse, they must not be too slight, or he would be apt to break down; the shoulder, too, is heavy, and the neck clumsy."

"I will alter them immediately," said the Lady Olivia, taking a piece of Indian-rubber, and quickly effacing the lines, and substituting new ones. "Now, do, *dear* Lord Fitzwarren, tell me if this is better;" and with the docility of a good child, she held the drawing out for his approbation, looking up innocently in his face all the while with pleading eyes and an affectedly sweet smile.

"Yes, this *is* better, infinitely better. By Jove! you improve amazingly."

"Thanks to your instruction," observed Lady Olivia, with a glance full of gratitude. "Oh! how I *should* like to have fine horses," exclaimed she, with assumed enthusiasm, "and go into the stable, and see the dear noble animals fed!"

"Would you, *indeed!*" asked Lord Fitzwarren, his face brightening up.

"Above all things in the world," resumed tha lady; "except going out hunting. *That* has ever been my utmost ambition, *mais, hélas!* I have no chance of such happiness!" and she sighed deeply.

"Who knows? Don't despair!" said Lord Fitzwarren.

"You must not give me false hopes, for mamma would never let me go out hunting, even if I had a horse," observed Lady Olivia. "Would you, mamma?" turning to Lady Wellerby, who affected to be busily engaged reading her English letters at the other end of

the room, but who was a pleased and attentive spectatress of the scene in which her artful and well-schooled daughter was so cleverly enacting her part.

"Did you speak to me, Olivia?" asked the lady-mother, slowly raising her eyes from the letter she was affecting to peruse.

"Yes, mamma; I asked you if you would permit me to go out hunting?"

"Go out hunting, child! An unmarried woman go out hunting? I never heard such a thing;" and Lady Wellerby elevated her eyebrows, and opened her small eyes to their utmost extent, with a look of well-acted astonishment.

"You see I was right," said Lady Olivia, and she sighed profoundly. "No; such happiness is not reserved for me. *I* shall never be able to go out hunting," and she shook her head slowly, and looked with a melancholy expression at Lord Fitzwarren.

"Not until you are married," replied he.

"So few men are really good riders, and only such could teach their wives to ride, that I have little chance of being so fortunate as to be selected by one;" and Lady Olivia sighed more deeply than ever.

"Don't despair. What wager will you bet me that before six months you are not married to a regular fox-hunter?"

"You are jesting, Lord Fitzwarren; I see you are," and the lady pouted and looked more sad than before.

"By Jove, I am not! Never was more serious in my life. I'll bet you five guineas to two; I'd make it fifty, only that I know young ladies seldom have much pocket-money, and I don't want to win all yours."

"I would take your wager," said Lady Olivia, in a low voice, "only that mamma would be angry, as she never allows us to make bets."

"She need know nothing about the matter," whispered Lord Fitzwarren, "so take my wager."

"Done," said Lady Olivia; and she nodded her head knowingly, and held out her hand to him, saying, "I shall be sure to win your five guineas; for, fond as I am of horses, and much as I should like to go out hunting, I don't know a single fox-hunter that I would marry."

Lady Wellerby, on whom not a word of this discourse had been lost, and who augured the happiest result from it, was so alarmed by this unexpected speech of her daughter, that she positively

started, and turned up her eyes towards the ceiling as if appealing to Heaven against the stupidity of that young lady. But Lady Olivia, who observed the movement, smiled inwardly at her own superior tact, while waiting to see what effect the *naïveté* of her declaration would have on him to whom it was addressed.

Lord Fitzwarren looked perfectly astounded and crestfallen as he gazed inquiringly on the unconscious countenance assumed by Lady Olivia, and, after a pause of a few minutes, exclaimed—

"And so you don't know a single fox-hunter whom you would marry?"

"No," replied the lady.

"Then, I suppose, you wouldn't marry me, eh?"

"But *you* are not a fox-hunter," said the lady, looking most innocently, "are you?"

"Why, what the devil else have you taken me for?"

"You never *told* me you were, and I—I—" and she cast down her eyes, and raised her handkerchief to her face, in affected confusion, to conceal, not her blushes, but her want of them.

"Well, I did not take you to be such a simpleton," said Lord Fitzwarren, his countenance brightening up. "But now you know that I am a fox-hunter—ay, and a most determined one, too—what do you say to your wager at present, eh? Come, confess that you haven't much chance of winning."

Lady Olivia still kept her handkerchief to her face, and seemed speechless from emotion.

"What will you give to be let off, eh? But, hang me, if I can account for *your* not knowing that which every one of my acquaintance is aware of, namely, that Melton has not a more thorough-going Nimrod than myself. Well, is there now a fox-hunter of your acquaintance that you would marry? Don't keep hiding your face, but say, will you have me or not?"

Lady Olivia extended her hand to him, and whispered, "Oh! I am so happy; but *do* ask mamma, for I am so overpowered—so....."

Lord Fitzwarren unceremoniously clasped her to his breast, imprinted a kiss on her lips, and walked up to Lady Wellerby, who affected not to be aware of what was going on at the other end of the room.

"Lady Wellerby," said he, "I am a plain-spoken, blunt fellow. I wish to marry Olivia; and, as I suppose you and her father can

have no reasonable objection, the sooner the affair is settled the better."

"All this is so sudden, so wholly unexpected, that I am quite taken by surprise," said the wily mother. "Come here, my dear child;" and she beckoned to Lady Olivia, who approached her with assumed timidity. "Do you entertain for Lord Fitzwarren that decided preference and fond attachment, without which, I hope, no child of mine would ever think of entering the married state?"

"Oh! yes, dear mamma;" and Lady Olivia again hid her face with her handkerchief.

"Then take my blessing, both of you, and may all happiness attend your union!" and Lady Wellerby kissed first her daughter, and then her future son-in-law, whom she congratulated on having secured the most warm-hearted and artless creature in the world!

"Artless enough, God knows!" observed Lord Fitzwarren. "Why, only fancy the little simpleton not knowing that I was a fox-hunter."

"Poor child! I have been so strict in the mode of bringing my girls up, that they are much more ignorant in the ways of the world than most young persons of their age."

"Well, confess, Livy," said Lord Fitzwarren, immediately adopting the familiarity of abridging her name, confess that you have lost your wager."

"I do confess," murmured the delighted Lady Olivia.

"Do you now think you won't have the happiness of going out hunting, eh? *That* you shall, and no occasion to ask mamma's permission, neither. But there's poor Sophy looking as blank and crestfallen as a jockey who has lost his race. You have been distanced, Sophy, but never mind; better luck another time; improve yourself in cutting out horses, and I'll take you down to Melton with Livy next season, and then you'll find plenty of good fellows unmarried;" and he walked up to Lady Sophia and gave her a brotherly salute.

"Settle the matter at once with the old governor," said he, turning to Lady Wellerby. "I hate long courtships; and, as Livy and I have said *done*, I don't see the good of waiting. I'll give her a devilish good settlement, I can tell you. All men on the turf *ought* to make large settlements, and give a good round yearly sum for pin-money, as they call it, to their wives; for when they get out of elbows, as we say—no uncommon thing with us, who stake thousands on a race—it is no bad look-out to have one's wife's

allowance to fall back on, and I know some right good fellows, regular goers, who have now nothing else left to depend on."

"I hope, dear Lord Fitzwarren, that you will take advantage and profit by such evil examples, and will not waste your fortune on the turf," said Lady Wellerby, looking alarmed.

"Why, whether I waste it on one green place or another, the green sward, or the gaming-table, comes much to the same in the end," replied Fitzwarren. "Most men of my rank and fortune try one or the other, and sometimes both. But I'm no greater fool than the rest, and have, besides, the luck to have a capital fellow for my training-groom, who keeps a sharp look-out, and puts me up to every thing going on in the other stables. There is not a racer in any of them that can make a trial, or even take a gallop, that I don't hear of it immediately. No, I'm a knowing one, I can tell you; up to a trick or two. To be sure, it costs me a mint of money to get my information—secret service money, I call it—but it's worth paying for; and my training-groom, an excellent fellow, does the thing as cheaply as he can. You have no idea how clever these training-grooms are. They sleep with their eyes open, I really believe, for they know every thing that's going on in the other stables, by night as well as by day. I have seldom been taken in, so well has my fellow kept a look-out; and when I was, he was fit to go mad. The way it happened was, he got a hint that two horses from other stables were to have a trial. He stole as near as he could get without being seen, and hid behind a hedge, when he saw a white-legged horse going a famous pace, and a black-legged one, which was a favourite, going as slow as a top. This put him out confoundedly, for he did not know the white-legged one, so he made his report to me; I was had, lost a cool five hundred, and discovered afterwards, through one of the boys whom my fellow got hold of, that the white legs were painted, in order to deceive lookers-on. Sometimes the trainers put shot in the pockets of the jockey to add to the weight, and take in people. It requires a devilish clear head and first-rate abilities to be able to keep one's own on the turf, I can tell you. Talk of the necessity of having clever men to be prime ministers and cabinet councillors, it's all a joke compared to the sharpness required to prevent one's being ruined on the turf. Why, your dearest friend will take you in if he can—ay, by Jove! your brother, if you have one. People talk of authors being clever, and making good books, but it demands fifty times as much cleverness to make a good betting-book."

Lord Fitzwarren was so animated now that he had got on his favourite subject, that he could have talked for hours, and disclosed the whole arcana of the secrets of the stables at Newmarket, which he considered the most important of all topics, had not Lady Wellerby, whose patience was exhausted, interrupted him, by saying, "I hope you will dine with us to-day."

"Can't, 'pon my soul! I ordered dinner this morning—not any more expecting that I was going to pop the question, ay, nor dreaming even of marriage, than that I was to ride a race—got some famous wild boar, and asked some of my countrymen to come and share it. We have all had enough of tame bores here, said I, so for novelty's sake let us try the wild boar. 'Twasn't bad, was it, Livy? They all laughed fit to crack their sides, but especially Webworth, who I thought would never stop, but he did, though, at last, and got me to lend him two hundred pounds."

"I trust, dear Lord Fitzwarren, that when you are a married man you will be more guarded, and not throw away your money by lending it to your improvident acquaintances," observed Lady Wellerby.

"Whew!" said or rather whistled Lord Fitzwarren, screwing up his lips. "So you call lending a couple of hundreds to a friend less prosperous than myself throwing away my money, do you? Now *I* have a very different notion on the subject. *I* call it putting out my money to interest, for, if by assisting a friend in a scrape I win his regard, have I not the best of it, eh? Mind, Livy, if you wish me to continue to like you, never try to turn me against my friends, and especially such of them as may stand in need of my help. I could not bear a woman who attempted this, for I have known so many good fellows spoiled and rendered good for nothing by their wives, that it half turned me against matrimony. Why, there was Robinson, a capital fellow before he married, ready to lend a helping hand to any friend in distress, but no sooner did he get a wife than he said—in answer to a letter from poor Webworth, who wrote to him from a lock-up house, whence three hundred would have ransomed him—that he was very sorry, but could not assist him, as he had pledged himself to his wife never to put his name to a bill, or to lend money. He ought to have been ashamed to write it, the snob, but no woman on earth could get me to throw off an old friend in distress, and I should hate her who tried it; so mind, Livy, you now know my mind."

"Dear kind-hearted Lord Fitzwarren!" murmured Lady Olivia,

in her most soothing tone of voice, for she observed that the selfish advice of her lady-mother had displeased and irritated her lover.

"I'll meet you to-night at Lady Mangerstien's," said he, and pressing her cheek with a kiss, and nodding to her mother and sister, he departed.

"You are a fortunate girl, Olivia,'" exclaimed Lady Wellerby, after looking towards the door, and giving time to her future son-in-law to leave the house. "You have thrown your net to some purpose, and caught your fish. It is a flat one, 'tis true; nevertheless, with plenty of mint sauce, it will go down well enough."

"I thought mint sauce was only used with lamb," observed Lady Olivia, with a more impertinent air than she had ever previously assumed towards her mother, with whom she felt offended for having spoken so slightingly of her affianced husband. Not that she experienced towards him any stronger sentiment than on the preceding day, when she had joined her mother and sister in ridiculing him, but *now* she had secured her golden prize, he was *her* property, and she resented his being attacked just as she would have done any abuse of a favourite lap-dog, merely because it *was hers*.

"Well, I don't envy Olivia, I am sure," said Lady Sophia, spitefully.

"What would you give to be in my place, though?" demanded Lady Olivia, with a smile of undisguised triumph. "Forty thousand a-year, three fine places in the country a good house in town, and the family diamonds, are not things to be despised."

"Certainly not, if one could have them without the man; but he really is such an uncouth, uncivilized creature, that . . ."

"Not more uncouth or uncivilized than those men for whom you have been, during the last ten years, unsuccessfully spreading your nets."

"Have done, Olivia. Sophia, cease to find fault with your sister's future husband," said Lady Wellerby, with a stately air. "You know the field was open to you both. Each tried for him, and, as Olivia has won the prize, you, Sophia, should be pleassed instead of being angry."

"*Me* angry, mamma! Well, I am sure I never thought of such a thing; never felt less angry in my life;" and the Lady Sophia burst into tears.

"I am quite certain that if Sophia had caught him I should not

have been angry or have cried," observed Lady Olivia, maliciously.

"You are greatly mistaken if you think I am angry, or that my tears have any reference to such a rude, ill-bred fox-hunter, for if *I* had chosen to pretend to dote on horses, to spend my mornings in making drawings of them, and to long to go out hunting, I might have had him instead of you."

"Did you not cut out horses on paper every day while I was drawing them? The only difference between us is, that my efforts succeeded, and yours did not. Probably Lord Fitzwarren saw that your cut paper horses resembled his favourite animals much less than my drawings did. However, let that be as it may, Sophy, you never had the slightest chance, I can tell you."

"Girls, this recrimination is odious—disgusting! You should look on this fortunate chance as an advantage, not to one sister alone, but to both. The marriage of Olivia to so capital a *parti* will draw attention to you, Sophia, and probably lead to your securing an eligible husband before long. I desire that you become reconciled at once. There, go kiss and be friends, and let not so lucky a day be clouded by jealousies and bickerings."

"I am sure I have no objection," said Lady Olivia, extending her hand to her sister.

"Nor I," pronounced Lady Sophia, coldly returning the proffered kiss. "How I hate her for giving herself such airs at having caught her booby!" thought Lady Sophia.

"How envious and jealous of my good fortune she is!" thought Lady Olivia.

And now papa returned from his diurnal visit to the reading-room; his temper, never good, more than usually ruffled, by having read in the *Morning Post* that the Lord-lieutenancy of his county, become vacant by the death of the Earl of Castlehaven, had been bestowed on Lord Deloraine. He had long anticipated that, when death should release Lord Castlehaven from all sublunary cares and duties, he would be the person selected to fill his place; great, therefore, was his ire at this disappointment, the cause of which he attributed wholly to his absence on the Continent having kept him from giving his wonted support to ministers in the House of Lords, and furnished them with an excuse for passing over his former claims, and appointing his enemy to the post he coveted. His absence was all the work of Lady Wellerby, and what good had it accomplished? Were his daughters any nearer being married? No; their chance seemed as remote as ever, and, as he dwelt on these annoyances, his wrath

increased, and he longed to pour its vials on the devoted head of his wife, whose recent demands for an advance on her pin-money again recurring to his memory, added fuel to the fire of his anger. His contracted brow, flashing eyes, and crimsoned cheek, betrayed, the moment he had entered the room, the tempest that was working in his heart; and had not his lady-wife felt that she had a balm to impart which would act on his wrath like oil thrown on the stormy waves, she would have trembled. Knowing that if once the hurricane burst, it would be difficult to check its fury, she approached him joyfully, and exclaimed, "Good news! good news!"

"Stuff, nonsense! Don't talk to me of good news! what new folly have you got in your head now?"

"No stuff, no nonsense, Lord Wellerby," and his lady-wife drew herself up to her utmost height. "Never again accuse me of not being a provident, ay, and a clever mother, too. Lord Fitzwarren has proposed for Olivia!"

"The devil he has! Is it sure, certain—no mistake again! You remember how you and Sophy fancied that Sir Thomas had proposed to her, because he made some foolish speeches to her when he was tipsy."

"*There is*, there *can* be no mistake *now*, for Lord Fitzwarren has spoken to *me*, and asked me to tell you that he wished to have the marriage take place as soon as possible."

"A good job a devilish good job! Did he say anything about expecting a fortune? I have no money to come down with—a trifle at my death—nothing more."

"He never referred to the subject, and I dare say never will: he only said that he wished to secure a large jointure, and liberal pin-money to Olivia."

"More fool he! But that's *his* affair, and not mine: he'll know better before he comes to my age. Well, well, I'm very glad of this match. Getting one daughter well off our hands may help to get off the other, and then we may live quietly at home at Wellerby Hall, and save money, instead of racketing about from place to place, without any comfort, eating bad meat and drinking sour wines enough to spoil one's stomach. There's old Castlehaven dead, and the lord-lieutenancy given to Beloraine instead of to me. All this comes from living abroad."

"But see what a brilliant marriage Olivia has secured; and this, too, comes from our living abroad. In London she never would have had such a chance, for there men have their clubs, and their

omnibus-boxes at the theatres, and lead such gay lives, that they have no time to think of marrying."

"There may be something in that," said Lord Wellerby; and his wife for the nonce escaped the angry reproaches he had determined on making her.

"How delightful it is for us to get Olivia so well settled in life, isn't it, my dear?" said she.

"Yes, I must say it is. It will be a great saving of expense, for the dress of a girl now-a-days costs an enormous sum; and another consideration is, I shall be more comfortable when travelling, for I can get my feet on her vacant place, and that will be a great relief to my legs, which used to suffer so much from being cramped up in our coach."

"Yes, it is a real happiness to have our daughter secure so brilliant a marriage, and to think how angry and jealous it will make all our friends and acquaintances, who have been hawking their girls about for years, in order to try to get them off their hands."

"For the matter of that, so have we, and a pretty sum it has cost me."

"You surely cannot regret it, my lord, when the result has been so fortunate! But, *à propos* of expense, I must call on you to loose your purse-strings, and let me have some money."

"Money, money, always money! If things go ill, you ask for money: and when things go well, you also demand it. There is no end to the folly and extravagance of women. Happy are they who keep aloof from them, and are spared the plague of wives and daughters."

"This is unkind Lord Wellerby, I must say; and more especially when my constant and arduous endeavours to secure an advantageous marriage for your daughter have been just crowned with success."

"*My* Daughter, Lady Wellerby! She is as much *your* daughter as mine, and it was as much for your own interest as for mine that you made the exertions for which you take such wonderful credit."

"It is no use bickering, Lord Wellerby, and therefore let us come to the point. It is indispensably necessary for me to have money, in order that Olivia should have some new dresses to appear in, now that all eyes will be turned on her as the *fiancée* of Lord Fitzwarren."

"I don't see the necessity, and, what's more, Lady Wellerby, I

*won't* see the necessity. If she caught the man in the dresses she has, it is quite evident that the great end and aim of all dress is accomplished, and a fig for what others may say or think on the subject. Besides, as she must have a regular fit-out for her marriage, which you must take care her *husband's* purse, and not mine, is to suffer for, it would only be throwing away money to buy her any gowns or other gimcracks at present."

"You would not surely be so illiberal, so mean, as to throw the expense of her *trousseau and corbeille de mariage* on Lord Fitzwarren?"

"Most certainly I will."

"It will be an unprecedented thing."

"Not altogether, for your lady-mother did the same by me. I was young and inexperienced then, so I was taken in, and now I will make my reprisal. I discovered afterwards that your father, good-natured, easy man, had given your mother three hundred pounds to rig you out, but she put it in her pocket, and made me pay for all."

"I did not expect, Lord Wellerby, that you would asperse the memory of my poor mother," and Lady Wellerby put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Asperse her! not I—never meant such a thing. I think she acted a wise part, and I want you to follow her example in making this young man do what I did thirty-five years ago, and for which you would require no prompting if you could pocket three hundred pounds, as your mother did, but which I'm too sharp to let you do. No; I'll make a bargain with you—I'll give you a hundred pounds for yourself, as a sort of per centage for getting Olivia off our hands, and if you get rid of Sophy I'll give you another. This young man is very rich and liberal, and knows nothing of what is the usual custom on such occasions. You can easily make him understand that he is to furnish everything, we providing him only with a wife: and if you could just get him to throw in a supply for Sophy it will be all the better."

"It will require great tact to manage all this, Lord Wellerby: but no one has ever accused me of want of that, when the happiness and interest of my husband and children are at stake; but you will, I trust, let me have the hundred pounds at once."

"But if the match should by any chance go off! You know the old proverb: 'Many things between the cup and the lip.'"

"Nothing can prevent it."

"Well, then, you shall have it to-morrow." And so saying Lord Wellerby retreated, dreading that, should he remain longer, his *cara sposa* might make some fresh demand on his purse. "She is not such a fool, after all, as I took her to be," murmured he to himself, as he strolled up to the Monte Pincio. "She has managed this affair very cleverly, I must say, and deserves credit for it: but I must not let her see that I think so highly of her management in the business. Women can't stand being praised: it puts them above themselves directly, and they expect to have all their unreasonable demands complied with; the best of them are but foolish, weak creatures, after all; always agog after some whim or other. I suspect my lady has been losing at cards lately; she did not say so, because she knew it would only draw a severe lecture from me. I have no patience with women playing for more than sixpences. Why I, who play as steady a game as most men, have lost this week about two hundred pounds, though I only played half-pound points, and betted a pound on the rubber. But I had such a confounded run of ill-luck against me—but it can't last, that's one thing, and I'll have my revenge to-night. I must put a stop to my wife's card-playing, if I find she has been losing, for I won't stand such goings-on. I fear this young fellow, Fitzwarren, is a wild chap: but *n'importe*, I'll have Olivia's marriage settlements and pin-money well taken care of; and, if he chooses to ruin himself, she will, at all events, be safe, and not be returned on my hands."

## CHAPTER IX.

Some madly rush into the marriage state
As if impell'd by a decree of fate,
Luv'd on by beauty, short liv'd as the flow'r
That fades, and withers in autumnal hour;
Or by ambition, avarice, or pride,
How many have been led to seek a bride—
Thoughtless of qualities of mind or heart.
To sweeten life when beauty shall depart;
Or when the gauds of pride and riches fade,
And man no longer is the dupe they made!
But still more mad are they, by folly led,
Who, without love, esteem, or prudence, wed.

"Have you heard the news?" said Strathern to Mrs. Sydney, the

first salutation having passed, the morning after the impromptu proposal of Lord Fitzwarren to the Lady Olivia Wellerby.

"Is it really true, or are you jesting?"

"Perfectly true, I assure you. It was announced last night at Lady Mangerstein's party, by Lady Wellerby, and the affianced lovers enacted the *rôle à merveille*. Fitzwarren, however, came to my room after, and, the excitement of the first few hours having subsided, he declared to me that now it was all settled, he had not the least notion how it had been brought about. 'Hang me, if I know how it was done,' were his precise words, 'for when I went there in the morning to call, I had no more idea of proposing for Livy than of flying, and what put it into my head I can't for the life of me tell. I wish I hadn't been in such a confounded hurry, for the chances are, if I had taken time to consider, I never should have proposed at all. And now that poor girl Sophy looks so unhappy that I did not choose her, that it gives me pain to see her. You know the old saying of Sir Robert Walpole's, the minister, that when he bestowed a place or a pension, he made a thousand foes, and one person ungrateful. I hope this won't be my case, for it would be too bad if all the girls I flirted with turn enemies, and Livy prove ungrateful. One thing is certain, and that is, Sophy is terribly cut up. Poor soul! I wish I could persuade some fellow to have her to console her for seeing Livy preferred.'"

Mrs. Sydney and Louisa could not resist laughing at Strathern's clever imitation of Lord Fitzwarren, and he, thus encouraged, proceeded to repeat the rest of the conversation.

"'But if you went to call on Lady Wellerby without any notion of proposing,' asked I, 'what led you to do so?'

"'Why, that's precisely what I can't make out myself; but I think it was because Livy took such pains to please me in drawing a horse, and expressed such a love for those fine animals, and such a longing desire to go out hunting, that I took pity on the poor girl, and, to secure her the enjoyments she coveted, proposed for her. I had a wager with her, too, and that urged me on.'"

"Absurd as all this is, you will observe," resumed Strathern, "that kindness of heart led poor Fitzwarren to commit this piece of folly, which will, in all probability, entail much unhappiness on him, for Lady Olivia is not, in my opinion, a woman calculated to render him a wiser or a better man."

"Marriage is a lottery," said Mr. Rhymer, who had entered

while Strathern was repeating Fitzwarren's conversation, "in which there are more blanks than prizes."

"It can only be so considered," observed Mrs. Sydney, "when the drawers are, like those who draw lottery-tickets, blindfolded, by which I mean, when persons marry before they are really acquainted with each other's tempers, dispositions, habits, and pursuits, on which knowledge happiness so much depends. A man becomes suddenly captivated with a beautiful girl. He sees her gentle and lady-like, as most women in society are, and he believes her to be as amiable as she is handsome; all men in love have the same belief. The girl, unless she happens to possess more good sense and reflection than fall to the lot of most young persons of her sex, satisfied by being beloved, and grateful for the preference accorded to her, liberally endows her lover with every excellent quality, and thus, under the influence of a mutual illusion, they marry. How few, even of the best people, can justify the exaggerated notions and expectations entertained of them previously to marriage! Every day, nay, every hour, rends asunder the veil that had concealed errors and defects never suspected to have existed, and the disappointment experienced leads to a sense of bitterness, very unlikely to extenuate the faults discovered, or to amend them by the exercise of that patience and good nature so needed to sweeten domestic life. The man who absurdly expected to find the lovely creature he had wedded faultless will, when defects are revealed, be prone to sink her from the angel he believed her to be to the very opposite of an angelical nature: and the woman who fancied her lover the perfection of mankind will be apt to think the husband who betrays his detection of her fallibility anything but delightful. Hence a fertile field for dissensions is sown, and life afterwards offers the wretched prospect of disappointed hopes, and perpetual difference of opinions."

"You have drawn a gloomy picture, my good lady," said Rhymer, "and, were I not long past the age when such a topic could personally interest me, I should lay it to my heart. I hope it will not appal those," and he glanced from Miss Sydney to Strathern, "whom it may more concern."

"Mrs. Sydney has only stated the case of persons who marry, without really knowing each other's characters, dispositions, and habits," observed Strathern.

"But is not love painted blind to denote that he can see no faults?" remarked Mr. Rhymer.

"The love that sees no faults is the love of weak boys and girls, and is little calculated to endure; but the affection that can continue after the knowledge of them is acquired, that can seek to amend, and bear them with indulgence, is the true, the rational love—the only sure foundation on which conjugal happiness can be based," said Mrs. Sydney.

"What is your opinion on this subject, fair young lady?" asked Mr. Rhymer, addressing himself to Miss Sydney. "Would *you* pardon the lover who could detect a fault in you? Mind, I assert that to do so would be impossible, for *heiresses* are never known to have any while they remain unmarried."

Louisa Sydney blushed, and bit her lip, for every allusion to *heiresses* pained and mortified her. "To suppose heiresses free from faults would be as foolish as to think that men of large fortunes had none. The only difference, in my opinion, between the rich and poor is, that wealth, by giving the power of gratifying one's inclinations, and rendering its possessor, to a certain degree, independent of others, exposes him to yield to temptations of self-indulgence from which the poor are exempt, and, by exciting envy and jealousy, causes his errors to be drawn more into notice."

"But self-indulgence, fair casuist, comprises in itself a whole arcana of evil."

"Does not that depend on whether the propensities indulged in are wrong?"

"Certainly," said Strathern, "for our noble ones ought to be ever encouraged. Some—the number is not limited—have more enjoyment in dispensing the goods of fortune on those requiring them than in expending their wealth in their own pleasures."

"But may not those very generous persons be influenced by ostentation, pride, and vanity, in thus distributing their wealth?" asked Mr. Rhymer.

"Why should we seek to attribute their liberality to such unworthy motives?" said Strathern.

"Would it not be wiser to be satisfied with the good they bestow, than to analyze the motive?" observed Mrs. Sydney.

"If you join with your fair daughter and Strathern against me, I shall have no chance in the argument," replied Mr. Rhymer. "Nevertheless, I must remind you that you have all wandered widely from the starting-post, my hypothesis being, that ladies would be little disposed to pardon the lover who *hinted* at a fault, and my supposition that heiresses never could have any until they

married. But, bless me! I forget that I have an engagement with the Abbate Manfredi at four o'clock; and your *pendule* reminds me that it now only wants a quarter to that hour. I leave my friend Strathern to continue the subject, and I have no doubt he will satisfactorily prove to Miss Sydney that she is and always must be in the right;" and, with a glance full of irony, Mr. Rhymer took his departure.

"How completely he possesses the art of making all with whom he converses dissatified with themselves!" observed Mrs. Sydney.

"Dissatisfied with him, I should say," replied Louisa. "I am glad he did not offer his services to escort us to the Vatican, for he would have endeavoured to prove to us that whatever we chanced to admire was precisely that which was least worthy of admiration, and so spoil our enjoyment there."

"Poor Rhymer!" said Strathern; "for poor he is, with all that might render him happy, except the healthful appetite for happiness. But I excuse his cynicism, from the conviction that it originates in a physical cause—viz. a diseased stomach, which has made more cynics than all the moral causes so frequently assigned for them put together."

Strathern's carriage followed Mrs. Sydney's to the Vatican; and he was handing both the ladies from theirs, when Lady Wellerby, her daughters, and Lord Fitzwarren, came up to the spot. Fitzwarren looked confused at the meeting, but not so the Lady Olivia, who leant on his arm, and assumed an air of triumph as she glanced at Louisa Sydney.

"I am sure, Mrs. Sydney, you will be glad to hear of the approaching nuptials of my daughter Olivia and Lord Fitzwarren," said Lady Wellerby. "A long attachment on his part," whispered she, "but he was so sly about it that I did not until lately suspect its existence; and Olivia is so guarded that, until he had positively proposed, she never named it to me."

Mrs. Sydney having made the usual and expected civil speech in reply, Lady Wellerby resumed, "Yes, I was sure you would be glad; the truth is, Olivia and Sophia have refused so many offers, and are so very fastidious, that I really began to fear they would accept no one: Lord Fitzwarren, however, there was no resisting. He is in every way unexceptionable, and so gifted, so clever and amusing, that no girl could refuse him. Only think how cunning he was. Oh, those men! he paid attention to other young ladies, while he thought only of Olivia, just as he now confesses, to see

what effect it would have on her. And she, poor dear creature, showed such delicacy and self-command that he was vanquished, and proposed for her a month sooner than he intended."

"I wonder you are not tired of coming to the Vatican," said Lady Olivia to Louisa Sydney; "I think it the most tiresome place in the world, don't I, Lord Fitzwarren?"

"Yes, and so do I too, Livy, except St. Peter's. Strathern does not think so, I know, for he is never tired of looking at all the statues, and vases, and stone coffins, with figures carved on them. What do they call them—sarco....?"

"Sarcophaguses," said Lady Olivia.

"Yes sarcophaguses—I always forget the name But, I say, Strathern, they are much better than our mode of burying people—the deal shell, the leaden coffin, and the mahogany one, covered with velvet, and silver nails, and coronets, for no good that I could ever see, but just for the rats and moths to destroy."

"Oh, dreadful! How can you, George, talk of any thing so horrible!" exclaimed Lady Olivia.

"Hang me, if I haven't a great mind to buy one of those sarco—sarcophaguses, and have it sent to England, to be ready when I kick the bucket; and, if I find one with any carvings of a fox-chase, I will, too, for that would be just the thing for me."

"Really, dear Fitzwarren, you will make me quite ill if you talk in this dreadful manner," said Lady Olivia.

"Why, you know, Livy, we must all die one day or other—we can't help it, do all we can—and one may as well have the stone coffin ready."

Lady Wellerby having released Mrs. Sydney from the confidential whispering, in which she revealed many things, and made many boasts that had no existence except in her own fertile brain, Louisa and Strathern were freed from witnessing the affected demonstrations of affection lavished, in looks even more than in words, by Lady Olivia on her betrothed husband, and the undisguised ill humour of Lady Sophia, who glanced spitefully at her sister, and opened not her lips during the time they were together.

"A devilish fine girl, after all!" said Fitzwarren, as he turned to look back at Miss Sydney; "it's a pity she is so shy and skittish." And he sighed deeply, to the no small annoyance of his intended bride, who, however, thought it more prudent to conceal the displeasure she felt.

Louisa Sydney could not resist a smile when the Wellerby party

left them, and Strathern did more, for, albeit unaccustomed to indulge much in laughter, he positively could not control his risible muscles. Mrs. Sydney too joined in the hilarity, being greatly amused by the attempts made by Lady Wellerby to prove that Lord Fitzwarren had never thought of proposing for any one but Lady Olivia, and that his attachment to her had been of long date.

The passion with which Louisa Sydney had inspired Strathern increased daily, and as her reserve wore away he discovered in her such fine and noble qualities that he felt his happiness wholly depended on her. Though he confessed not his love, his every glance revealed it: and she now smiled when she recollected her suspicion of her mother having been the object of his attention, and learned to value the conquest she had achieved. It was impossible to know Strathern well without liking him. High-minded, generous, and warm-hearted, with manners unaffected and highly-polished, he possessed a peculiarly sweet and even temper, and these qualities made themselves duly appreciated, as they became unfolded in daily intercourse with those he liked. Pride, or rather a self-respect, carried to a degree that rendered him painfully susceptible at any implied doubt of his principles, and almost implacable towards those who betrayed such a doubt, was his besetting sin, and to this was added a craving ambition to be loved for himself alone, that quite equalled the similar desire experienced by the object of his affection. Regardless of her wealth for itself, he was not sorry that she was rich, for should he win her hand it would preclude all doubt from his mind that he was preferred from mercenary motives, and the frequent examples he had seen of the all-powerful influence of this sordid sentiment had rendered him somewhat suspicious of the preferences accorded by portionless girls to wealthy suitors. But while he was glad that *he* was saved all ground for doubt on this point, it never once occurred to him that she he loved could entertain even the shadow of one relative to *his* motives. Was he not rich enough to be exempt from suspicion? and was not Louisa lovely enough to win him to her feet, were she poor? Yes, he would have sought her hand as a treasure above all price, had she been wholly unprovided with the gift of fortune: and so certain did he feel of this, that he only remembered she was an heiress in the pleasure of that fortuitous circumstance excluding doubt of her being influenced by mercenary motives. The sympathy in their tastes and sentiments, long apparent to Mrs. Sydney, was now felt by both Strathern and

Louisa. Often would she exclaim, when she heard him express opinions perfectly in unison with her own, "Yes, I was certain you would think so;" and he would yield a ready assent to *her* anticipated notions of *his*.

As the new-born and all-engrossing passion of love developed itself in the breast of the fair Louisa, existence assumed a brighter aspect for her. Nature seemed to have put on new charms; the very air was lighter, and visions of happiness floated through her mind. Where now were all the resolutions she had formed of coldly and deliberately examining into the disposition and sentiments of Strathern before she yielded to him her heart? That heart was now irrevocably his, and she could no more recall it than if she had never been its mistress. This affection, which had grown into life so gradually, was in full vigour before she was aware of its extent and power, and was now so closely interwoven with her every dream and hope of happiness that to tear it from her heart would be to destroy her peace for ever. Her mother would smile as she noticed the more than usual care bestowed of late on her *toilette* by Louisa, and the deference she evinced to the taste of Strathern. He had observed one day that his favourite colours were pale pink, blue, and lilac; and from that hour those hues were in turn invariably adopted by the lovely girl in the ribands she wore.

O, Love! how powerful is thy empire on youthful hearts; and how canst thou deck all in thine own gay and brilliant tints! To awake in the morning with the certainty of meeting the object beloved in the day, and to close the eyes at night to dream of him, is in itself happiness enough to satisfy for a long time the young and pure breast of her who loves for the first time, and believes in the indestructibility of the passion with which she is inspired.

Strathern's approach made her heart beat quicker; his presence filled her soul with gladness; and, content with the present, she asked not, thought not, what the future might bring. How did Strathern delight in the change operated in the idol of his affection! Now were fully unfolded to him the charms of her mind, so long concealed beneath the reserve she had during so many weeks maintained, and her sparkling and playful vivacity, which invested her with new attractions, rendered her more captivating than ever.

Strathern was not a vain man, and, like all who truly love, he was not confident of success, and consequently his dread of prematurely avowing his passion prevented him from seeing what any one

less interested in the affair must have guessed, namely, that he need not fear a refusal. This modesty on his part better served his interest with Louisa Sydney than any other line of conduct could have done; and, had he been an artful instead of a high-minded lover, he could not have hit on a more effectual mode of subjugating her he sought to win. Women with refined sentiments and proud minds are flattered by timidity in their suitors, and are much more disposed to bestow their heart on him who appears to doubt his chance of obtaining the gift than on one who seems sure of it. The generosity of the female character, too, is called into action by timidity, while its pride is alarmed by confidence and assurance in a lover. Louisa felt that she was beloved. A thousand indescribable but satisfactory proofs daily conveyed this delightful conviction to her breast. The heart has its instincts as well as the reason, and all the efforts of the last would have been unavailing to remove the impression of the first. She passed some hours of every day in the society of Strathern. She met his earnest gaze fixed on her face with an expression of tenderness not to be mistaken, and she saw that she occupied his whole attention. Yet he avowed not his passion; and, as day by day flew rapidly by, and the season for leaving Rome advanced, she became conscious of an anxiety and agitation, not unmingled with dread, lest some obstacle existed to prevent the declaration on which she felt her happiness now depended. Her changeful cheek, her downcast eye, revealed to Strathern that the moment was come to claim that hand for which he had so long and ardently sighed, and he determined to seize the first opportunity chance might offer to declare his devotion to the lovely Louisa. Something in his manner betrayed to her what was passing in his mind: and now, with that shyness and modesty inherent in the female heart, she trembled at the approach of that avowal for which she had lately so anxiously longed, and bashfully avoided affording the opportunity which it was evident Strathern sought of revealing his feelings to her. This coyness on her part invested her whole manner with a new grace. No longer was Louisa the reserved and somewhat haughty heiress, questioning the motives of her adorers, and betraying her disdain for those she suspected of mercenary ones. She was now the bashful, timid girl, tremblingly alive to the consciousness of loving and being loved, and as wholly forgetful as her admirer himself of her wealth, and the attraction it might furnish.

The opportunity Strathern sought offered itself a few days after

he had determined on avowing his affection to its object. A visit to the Pamphilia Gardens having been proposed by Mrs. Sydney, Strathern attended them there. On arriving, they encountered Lady Melbrook, who joined them, and, wholly occupying Mrs. Sydney's attention, left Strathern time to speak to Louisa alone, as she walked after her mother. "Will you pardon me," said he, "if I snatch this occasion of addressing you on the subject most dear to my heart. I have long panted for an opportunity of revealing that which you, most beloved Miss Sydney, must have guessed."

"O, Mr. Strathern! not now, another time," said Louisa, blushing like a rose when first its leaves open to the sun.

"Only say that I am not wholly indifferent to you, that I may hope, dear lovely Louisa—one word to make me the happiest man on earth. You turn from me—you will not tell me I may hope!"

Louisa looked at him, and as her beautiful eyes met his they revealed more eloquently than words could have done all that was passing in her soul. She gave him her hand, which trembled with emotion; he raised it for a moment to his lips, and in that brief interval both felt that their destinies were sealed—were indissolubly united. Tears sparkled in the dark and lustrous eyes of Louisa, and gemmed those delicate blushing cheeks on which they shone like orient pearls on a rose-leaf. She applied her handkerchief to remove them, and when she had done so, Strathern begged so earnestly to have it that it was accorded to him, and after being repeatedly pressed to his lips, was consigned to his breast. "May I speak to your mother, dearest, best Louisa?" whispered he.

"Yes" was softly murmured, and never had that monosyllable sounded so sweetly in his ears before. How fair seemed now the scene around the lovers! The luxuriant plants and odorous flowers, the rich foliage and the limpid waters of the fountains, never before looked so beautiful; nay, even the formal hedges of privet and box no longer appeared tame and artificial, and the green lizards, as they sported in the slanting sunbeams on the walls, instead of being merely a bright green as usual, seemed to glitter like emeralds.

"Let me hear the sound of that dear voice again. Speak to me, adored Louisa! Call me Henry, for I long to hear my name pronounced by those dear, beautiful lips."

"Henry, dear Henry!" whispered Louisa, in accents so soft, so full of tenderness, that her lover longed to throw himself on his knees, and to thank her, by pressing those small and exquisitely

formed feet to his lips. Both felt that to be the happiest hour of their lives. All fear and doubt were now removed, and, confident in the affection of each other, the present was blissful, and the future offered to them only bright and boundless vistas of endless, illimitable love and felicity.

"Do not let me go to Lady Mangerstein's to-night, dearest, but let me come and spend the evening with you and your mother. I know Mrs. Sydney prefers staying at home, and I should not like to find myself in a crowd the evening of *le plus beau jour de ma vie*."

"I, too, could not bear to go," said Louisa, and her lover thanked her with his eyes.

Mrs. Sydney turned to speak to her daughter, and, with the quick perception peculiar to women, at once saw that something had greatly excited her feelings. But she perceived also, by Louisa's smile, that whatever had occurred was of a pleasurable nature, and the fond mother was content.

Strathern seemed to tread on air for the rest of the day, so elated were his spirits at the result of his brief *tête-à-tête* with the beautiful Louisa. His passion for her had positively increased since he had learned that he was dear to her, for gratitude was now added to the other motives for attachment which had previously existed in his heart for this lovely and amiable girl. How few men of the present day, in whom vanity and self-appreciation are such prevalent characteristics, would have experienced or even understood the feelings that filled his breast on this occasion! Most of his contemporaries would have deemed that it was the young lady selected who was to be grateful, and not the lover, little dreaming that the preference accorded by a youthful and pure-minded girl is a blessing, the sense of which never should be forgotten by him who is so fortunate as to have gained it. They judge the hearts of women by their own; consequently it is not to be wondered at that they do not greatly prize such gifts, nor long retain them. Strathern was widely different from this herd of vain and selfish trifflers, and was as grateful to Louisa Sydney for her acceptance of his vows as if he possessed not a single claim to justify his pretensions to her favour; nor, though now assured of her preference, was he, like the generality of young men, disposed to take less pains to please her than heretofore. No, he would prove to her that she had not bestowed her heart on one who was insensible to the inestimable value of the gift, and his whole life should be devoted to the

study of her happiness. As he entered his apartment, he desired that no visiter should be admitted, and threw himself into a chair, that he might, free from interruption, give way to the indulgence of the blissful emotions that filled his soul. In that chamber, how many anxious cares, how many doubts and fears, had he known since he had learned to love the fair Louisa; how often had her reserve and coldness sent him back to it in despair, to recall every look of hers that checked, every word that chilled, his new-born, but faint hopes! And now all fears were over. She had sanctioned his affection—nay, more, had let him see it was reciprocal. How he blessed her for it! and the present, blissful as it was, would be followed by happiness still greater—that of her becoming wholly his; and had he not cause to be grateful to the lovely being who had thus thrown the sunshine of her love over his life, and rendered all that had been hitherto tame and joyless bright and glowing?

## CHAPTER X.

Wealth, fame, and honours, what are ye but toys,
That lure the man, as playthings lur'd the boy?
As worthless, and as brief, the joys ye give:
For age, with is infirmities, soon comes,
And when it racks your frames, and chills your hearts,
What then avails that honour, fame, and wealth
Are yours? They cannot lull disease, or pain,
Or bribe the tyrant Death, who hovers near,
To grant one little hour to waning life.

We left Lord Alexander Beaulieu meditating on the best mode of making the acquaintance of Mrs. Maclaurin, the widow of the rich stockbroker. As a preparatory step to this desired end, he that day took possession of apartments in the hotel where she had fixed her abode, thinking that so close a vicinity to her might furnish him with some opportunity of accomplishing the object which he had in view, and if chance assisted him not, he determined on relying on his own wit, ever fruitful in making, as well as adroit in seizing, opportunities for carrying his plans into effect. Decided on storming the citadel, he, like an experienced general, first proceeded to reconnoitre the outposts, and so directed his attention to

the *entourage* of the widow. A *dame de compagnie*, in the person of a middle-aged woman, whose poverty, and not whose will, had induced her to consent to fill that situation, was the humble companion of Mrs. Maclaurin, and humble, indeed, was the luckless person, or she would not long have occupied it, for the lady whose salary she received, and whose bread she ate, was not one who would permit freedom of thought, speech, or action, to any one dependant on her. Mrs. Bernard, for so was the unfortunate companion named, was a woman who had been severely schooled in adversity. Steeped in poverty to its very dregs, she had learned that though the bread of dependance is bitter, it is, nevertheless, infinitely better than having no bread at all; and with this conviction, which had been forced on her by sad experience, her sole object was to conciliate Mrs. Maclaurin, and, by rendering herself necessary to that lady, to secure a permanent position in her establishment. Mrs. Bernard, the orphan daughter of a poor clergyman, had in early life married the curate of her father, who soon left her a widow, to fight her way through a pitiless world, by earning a scanty subsistence in the capacity of humble friend or dependant to such ladies as were unblessed with daughters, nieces, or cousins, to render companionship in their homes. Much had Mrs. Bernard suffered in the various dwellings into which her evil destiny had thrown her, and patiently had she endured these trials. Delicate in health, and broken in spirit, she submitted to treatment, the injustice of which inflicted many a pang, while she scrupulously concealed every symptom of dissatisfaction from those at whose hands she received it, well aware that neither remonstrance nor entreaty would procure any amelioration to her condition.

Heroism is not confined to the great ones of the earth, or to men alone. Often is it found in the poor and humble, and exemplified in the constancy with which, Spartan-like, they hide that which is preying on their hearts. How many a pale cheek, attenuated form, and downcast eye, reveals the grief which the tongue never utters, and betrays the sorrow hushed in the day, and indulged only when night gives a few hours of solitude—that boon so prized by those whose time appertains to another! In all the situations held by Mrs. Bernard, it had been discovered by those she served that she was dull and unamusing. One lady declared that her melancholy countenance gave her the vapours, yet never tried by kindness to render it less sad. A second said she was so inanimate and monotonous, that her presence invariably cast a gloom wherever she

appeared; and a third asserted that she believed Mrs. Bernard had no feeling, she bore being scolded with such composure; while a fourth dismissed her on having one day observed a tear, which she had vainly endeavoured to check, steal down her cheek when severely reproved for some trivial forgetfulness, alleging that she disliked sulky dispositions. In one family she had lost her situation because the lady's *femme de chambre* had threatened to leave, unless, as she she stated, that mopish toady, who was obliged to say yes or no just as her mistress wished, was discharged, for *she* had no idea of submitting to her insolence in not coming to the housekeeper's room to take a sociable cup of tea, or a hand at cards when left at home by her lady.

What woman, and, above all, one of a certain age, and fond of dress, could hesitate between parting with a *dame de compagnie*, who only served to write her notes, read her to sleep, ring the bell, and bear her ill-humour, and a *femme de chambre* initiated in all the secrets of her mistress's personals defects, and well versed in the mysteries of the *toilette* essential for concealing them—one who possessed the art of making false hair look very like the natural growth of the head when seen at a distance, who applied pearl powder and rouge so artistically as to induce, at least, the wearer to believe that they might deceive others for the hues of youth and health, and who could remedy the want of *embonpoint* by the judicious application of cotton and muslin, or dispose of any unbecoming superfluity of it so judiciously as to give to fat ladies some appearance of a shape. If women capable of making such sacrifices as to resign such skilful *femmes de chambre* do exist, Mrs. Bernard had not been so fortunate as to find them, and she soon became convinced that the *rôle* of lady's-maid was a much more important one in an establishment than that of *dame de compagnie*, who though in presence is never *of* the company. But when she received her *congé* from a situation where she had borne and forborne as never human being before had done, because the lapdog of the lady had bitten her so severely that he had actually taken out a piece from her leg, and that his mistress declared she 'feared it would make poor dear Fidelle sick,' the unhappy woman arrived at the conclusion that not only ladies'-maids but *even* lapdogs, were more necessary to their owners than *dames de compagnie*, a conviction which rendered her still more dispirited and humble. Mrs. Bernard esteemed herself fortunate when engaged by Mrs. Maclaurin to accompany her to Italy. The well-known wealth of that lady, and

an appearance of good humour in her manner, led her to suppose that with her she might escape some, if not all, of the trials and annoyances which she had encountered in the situations she had previously filled. The history of the *parvenue* widow was well known in the English world, her vast wealth and profuse expenditure having excited much attention, and, as is usually the case on such occasions, having drawn many animadversions to her origin. But the *on dit* relative to this reputed female Crœsus, while they rendered Mrs. Bernard aware that she was low-born, uneducated, and ill-bred, led her to hope that one who had been so prosperous would prove kind-hearted and good-natured, and with this hope she entered her establishment.

Mrs. Maclaurin was of Irish extraction, or, as she herself termed it, of Irish *distraction*. Hired in a provincial town in her native country as nurserymaid in the family of Colonel Fairfax, whose regiment was stationed there, she conducted herself so well that, when the regiment was recalled to England, she, nothing loth, accompanied his family to London, being, as she expressed herself to her fellow-servants, anxious to see England, and hoping, to make her fortune. They laughed at this idea, little thinking there was any chance of its being realised, for Molly Malowny was neither handsome in her person nor engaging in her manner. She possessed, however, one gift, and that was her voice—clear, soft, and harmonious, she sang the ballads of her native land with a sweetness of which not even the strong brogue peculiar to her class could impair the effect. She founded her hope of success in life on this solitary attraction, and was, therefore, anxious to display it whenever she could. By it she soothed the children of Colonel Fairfax to sleep, and so accustomed did they become to her melodious lullaby, that they refused to slumber without it. Their attachment to Molly conciliated the good-will of their parents towards her, though they were not blind to a certain degree of violence of temper, obstinacy, and false pride but too frequently observable in her.

On a visit to Brighton one autumn, where Molly attended her mistress and the children, chance led to their taking up their abode in an hotel where lodged the rich Mr. Maclaurin, a well-known stockbroker of London. His apartments happened to be the next to those occupied by the children of Colonel Fairfax, and Molly's nightly lullaby was as distinctly heard by that gentleman as by those to whom it was addressed, and produced as soothing an influence. The child of Scots parents settled in trade in Ireland,

Mr. Maclaurin first saw the light in the Emerald Isle, and though he left it to enter as a clerk in a mercantile office in London when he was in his seventeenth year, and that now he had reached his seventieth, his ear quickly recalled the sweet and plaintive songs to which it had been familiar in his youth, and with them came back the memory of that joyous period, awakening the first tender feelings he had experienced for long, long years. He was surprised to find his eyes moistened as he listened to the dulcet harmony of the olden time, and drank in the notes with a pleasure, pensive though it was, which the finest Italian music, sung by the most admired *prima donnas* of the opera, had failed to excite. When the strain ceased, how he yearned to hear it again, and longed to know who the syren was that had so charmed him! He dreamt that night of the days of his youth, of the wild mountains, green valleys, and clear streams, amid which his childhood had been passed. The cells of memory, closed for above half a century, opened, as it were, by the hand of an enchanter, gave forth images and feelings which long, long had slumbered, and the old man was again, in imagination at least, invested with something of the warm feelings of other and happier days, ere he had learned to bestow every thought on the accumulation of gold, and find enjoyment only in hoarding it. And the enchanter who worked this miracle was no other than the clear, sweet, but uncultivated voice issuing from the larynx of Molly Malowny, who, unconscious of the effect she was producing, "warbled her wood-notes wild" for the sole purpose of inducing the slumber of her youthful charge.

"Who sleeps in the next room to me, Donald?" demanded Mr. Maclaurin when his servant entered his chamber the morning after he had first heard Molly's song.

"In gude troth, sir, I dinna exactly ken," replied the Scotsman.

"I wish you would inquire, then," said his master.

"Weel, I'll do sae, sir, when I go to order your breckfast."

"Go now, this moment, and find out."

"Hoot awa!" muttered Donald as he proceeded on his errand; "I dinna ken what the auld mon wants. It is clear he has got a bee in his bonnet, puir auld creetur; but he munna be fashed, so I maun e'en gang my gaits and inquire."

The chambermaid revealed to Donald that the occupants of the bed-room next to his master's were the children of Colonel Fairfax.

"Ay, there's the mischief. Bairns always make sic an ado; I warrant me they have disturbed the maister, and I must say it was nae over wise of ye to put the wee folk sae near an auld mon who isn't used to the like, so find anither chamber for them, or e'en give me maister ane."

"You are as slow as a top, Donald," said Mr. Maclaurin, as his servant entered the room.

"Weel a day, sir; I'm na so lithe as I was, it must be owned—but waes me! age comes to all—to rich and puir, to gude and bad—and nae ane can help it."

"Have you found out who occupies the next apartment?"

"Ye mauna be fashed, sir; it was an o'ersight in me not to hae jist asked the womankind wha makes the beds, wha sleepped in the room hard by ye, but truth is, I jist forgot it till ye speered at me this morn, and I find it is the bairns of a Curnel Fairfax; unco' noisy, I'll warrant me, but I hae tauld the chambermaid she must e'en put them far away from yer chamber, or else ye'll gae to anither yoursel."

"Then you're a fool for your pains, that's what you are," said Mr. Maclaurin, in a greater passion than Donald had seen him in for many years. "I *won't* have the children moved on any account. Why, I would not have them leave the next room for a thousand pounds."

"Hoot awa, sir! a thousand pounds is a great sum; but I suppose ye'll be for moving yersel into anither chamber."

"I tell you, I won't; *there* they, poor little things, shall stay, and *here* will I remain, as long as I can manage it; so go directly and tell the chambermaid that no change is to be made, and, hark you, find out who the person is who sings in the next room."

"Puir body! he's vara strange the day. I dinna ken what has come to him. Mayhap it's a lightning afore death. Auld Moggy Macpherson, wha had the gift of the second sight, often said that when auld men took strange fancies, it was an unco' bad sign, and not canny, and the puir body is nae sae young as he was fifty years ago. I should nae wonder if he was near his end. Let me see, he's aulder than I am by a matter of five years; puir body, I'll be sorry to see him gang to the grave, but it canna be helped, we maun all go there sooner or later. But when he's gone, I'll tak the legacy he told me he had put in his will for me, and I'll gang to bonny Scotland, and spend my auld days in comfort there.

All this muttered old Donald to himself, as he proceeded in quest of

the chambermaid, to countermand the order he had lately given her, which countermand produced the reflection from her, that "She wished some people knew their own minds, and then they would give less trouble to other people."

"But wha sleeps in the ither room next my master's?" asked Donald.

"A Methodist preacher."

"Does he sing?" demanded Donald.

"Yes, I sometimes hear him singing hymns, and a disagreeable voice he has, too, chanting through his nose."

"Troth, then, the mischief's out at last; that's what the auld master meant when he tauld me to find out wha was the person that sang in the next room. Could you nae put the preacher in anither room?"

"Well, I don't mind if I do, for he's a stingy hound, and is not worth considering."

"What a time you have been away, Donald!" exclaimed Mr. Maclaurin, when his servant returned. "You really get so old and infirm, that you are not capable of performing your service. I must get a young and active man, for you wear out my patience."

"Age is honourable, I've aye heard say," replied Donald, "and I'm nae ashamed to show my grey hairs, and I maun say it's unco' unkind in ye to speak sae to yer puir old servitor, after all the years he has passed in trying to please ye," and Donald shook his grey locks, and took out his pocket-handkerchief, which he applied to his eyes.

"Have you found out who the person is that sings?" demanded Mr. Maclaurin, half melted by the reproach of his old servant.

"I ha'e, sir; 'tis e'en a Meethodist preacher wha sings the hymns, and the housemaid will put him awa to anither room."

"A Methodist preacher! You and the chambermaid are a couple of fools together. I tell you the voice I mean is a woman's voice, and the sweetest, too, that I have heard these fifty years, and her songs no more resemble the nasal twang of a Methodist preacher than I am like—what I was fifty years ago," said Mr. Maclaurin, heaving a deep sigh. "Find out who this woman is. I must hear her sing again, and as often as possible. Discover her position in life, and lose no time about it. But stay, I'll dress as quickly as I can, and when I'm at breakfast, you can make your inquiries."

"And sae 'tis the woman-kind that's running in his puir auld heed all this while!" thought Donald to himself. "Puir auld

body, I begin tae think he's daft. Weel, it canna be helped, age weel come, and auld men weel get into their dotage. God preserve me frae gieing my thoughts to the women-kind when I get to be seventy, for it's an unco' fashious thing! but I have got a matter of five years before me before I get to be seventy, and five years is a long while; and I'll nae my legacy yet, and go to auld Reekie."

When Mr. Maclaurin had breakfasted, and he enjoyed his matinal repast much less than usual, so engrossed were his thoughts by the singer, he rang for his servant, and was half tempted to quarrel with him for the time he took to answer the summons, as he entered the apartment, panting and out of breath, from ascending the steep stairs.

"Have you found out who the person is?" demanded he, before Donald had time to close the door.

"I ha'e, sir: she's an Irish lassie, and tends upon the bairns of Curnel Fairfax."

"Irish! I knew she must be. But is she a governess, or only a nursemaid, Donald?"

"She maun be a servant, I guess, sir, for she taks her meals wi' the ither servant folk, and I mind in the families I ever kenned, the governess took her meals wi' the maister and mistress of the house, or wi' the bairns she was teaching."

"Yes, she must be a servant. I am sorry for it, for I should like to have found her a grade above that. A governess would have been the thing: poor—that unhappy class are all so—poor, and with an education, I might have befriended her, and her music and accomplishments would have charmed my old age," murmured Mr. Maclaurin, but not in so low a tone as to escape the ears of his domestic.

"He's quite demented, puir gentleman," thought Donald, "for it's clear that he's fashed to ken that this lassie is a servant. Wae's me, his puir head is quite crazed. At seventy to be thinking o' lasses! Who e'er heard the like, and I, wha ha not mair than sixty-five, ne'er gie a thought to them! Ay, ay, he maun be demented quite, puir body!"

"Well, then, as she is a servant, there can be, I think, no chance of giving offence in offering her a present. Here, Donald, are five sovereigns," and Mr. Maclaurin opened his purse and deliberately counted out the gold; "give these to the young woman, and tell her that they come from an old man who has been delighted with her singing,

and who will be much gratified by hearing it again, whenever it is convenient to her."

"Five golden pieces! Weel, I maun say yer o'er leeberal of yer gold. If I give her one o' them the lassie will be right glad; but five! — 'twad be a sin and a shame."

"I don't want your opinion on that point, Donald. Do as you're bid."

"Mr. Maclaurin, I've been your faithful servitor for thirty-sax years, three months, and sax days, and till the day ye never offered me sic an affront, and it's nae weel done o' ye; for, tho' I am but a servitor, I know my duty, and I am a reg'lar attendant at the kirk, and it's nae right o' ye te send me a corrupting a young lassie wi' yer siller."

Mr. Maclaurin opened his eyes to their utmost extent, and gazed on Donald with perfect astonishment.

"Why, what on earth can you have got into your head, you stupid old blockhead?" exclaimed he. "Me send you corrupting a young woman! Why, you must be perfectly crazed—stark, staring mad!"

"Nae quite, sir. But what can a body think when his maister asks him to find out all manner of parteeculars about a young lassie, and wants to send her enow siller to pay a year's wages?"

"It is only a suspicious old fool like you who could form such wicked surmises about his master," replied Mr. Maclaurin, not a little ruffled by his servant's reflections, yet, such is the weakness of human nature, somewhat flattered, too, at being supposed still young enough to have the views imputed to him on the young woman in question. "So you refuse to take the money to this person?"

"Yes, sir, I'm fashed to be compelled to refuse to obey yer orders, but I munna gae again' my conscience and the princeeples of the kirk."

"You are enough to provoke a saint, that's what you are, you old blockhead! but I'll send you about your business, and get a young, active man to wait on me."

"Ye maun e'en do as ye weel, sir; and, in gude troth, if ye maun gang about corrupting young lassies wi yer siller, ye had better get a young man wha hae nae conscience, and attends nae kirk, than a man wi gray hairs like me."

"Leave the room, leave the room, I have no patience with you," exclaimed Mr. Maclaurin, really discomposed by the pertinacity of

Donald in attributing improper motives for his generosity towards the songstress whose voice had charmed him, and for refusing to convey his gift to her.

When, some time after breakfast, Mr. Maclaurin retired to his bed-chamber—and truth compels us to declare that he went there in the hope of hearing his unseen syren sing again—he was delighted to find her warbling forth the following song, the music in which abundantly atoned for the want of poetry in the words, and for the rich Irish brogue in which they were pronounced : —

"Oh! ask me not to leave my home,
My own dear native land,
Away in foreign climes to roam,
A wand'rer on each strand.

I cannot leave the mountains high,
That rise to meet the sun;
Nor the green vales that 'neath them lie,
Through which clear streamlets run.

I cannot leave my father dear,
Nor quit my mother's side;
I cannot chase the starting tear,
Nor e'er become your bride.

Go seek some maid who prizes gold,
And give to her your hand;
But my true heart shall ne'er be sold—
I'll stay in mine own land."

Mr. Maclaurin scarcely allowed himself to breathe, so fearful was he of losing a single note of the song, and when it ceased he longed to hear it again. He folded five sovereigns, the identical five that Donald had refused to convey to the Irish maiden, in a paper, and wrote a few lines on the envelope, stating that "an old man, passionately fond of music, had derived so much pleasure from hearing the person in the next room sing, that he begged her acceptance of the sum enclosed, and joined to it a request that she would indulge him by singing in her chamber whenever he was in his, which he would make known by gently knocking on the partition." Having sealed this little parcel, the next difficulty was how it could be delivered. Donald would not take it, and to ask the waiter or housemaid to convey it would be to expose the young Irishwoman to their suspicions and animadversions. What was he to do? It occurred to him that the safest and simplest plan would be to watch until the songstress should be leaving her chamber, and then to meet her, and put the billet into her hand. He waited some time, but, find-

ing that she did not leave her room, he took courage, approached her door, and having, with a trembling hand, tapped at it, was told, in a voice much less musical than he anticipated, to "Come in." He had expected that, on his knocking at the door, the person he so much desired to meet would come forward to open it, and so save him the necessity of entering the chamber, which he, being a very timid and staid man, wished to avoid, thinking it indecorous. But, when he knocked again, the words, "Botheration to ye, why can't ye come in when yer tould?" uttered in a loud and coarse tone, had such an effect on him that he was retreating quickly to his own room, when Molly Malowny, suspecting that some one was hoaxing her, ran into the passage, and seeing Mr. Maclaurin retreating as rapidly as his infirm legs enabled him to do, she pursued him, and, shaking him roughly by the coat, exclaimed. "And arn't ye ashamed o' yerself, an ould man like ye, to be comin' knockin' at a dacent girl's door, and then runnin' away like a thief? What di ye mane by it?"

"Don't be angry—pray don't; I meant no harm—indeed I did not—but I wanted to give you this," and he offered her the letter.

"Who is it from, and what is it about? Spake out; what are ye so shy and afeard for, if it isn't some mischief ye have in that ould head of yours?"

"Take the letter, I beg of you; that will explain all."

Ere Molly Malowny could answer, and while the letter was in her hand, Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax suddenly turned an angle in the passage, and were close to her. Both master and mistress looked the surprise they felt.

"What means this?" asked the colonel sternly.

"Indeed, sir, and that's what I want to know," replied Molly Malowny. "This ould gintleman, and more shame for him, comes to my door, when I was at work tinkin' o' nothing at all, and raps. 'Come in,' says I, little dhramin' who was there, but, instead of coming in, he raps again. 'Botheration to ye,' says I, 'whoever you are; why can't ye come in when yer tould?' But not a bit does any one come, so I puts down my work, and by the same token 'twas the child's chimey* my misthress gave me to make, and I runs to the door and opens it, and what should I see but this same ould man runnin' away as fast as a lamplighter; and so, as I saw he wanted to make a fool of me by knockin' and runnin' away, I jist

* Chemise.

made bould to folly him, and ax him what he maned by such doin's to a dacent girl like myself, and he says he only wanted to give me a letther, and puts this into my hand. That's the whole truth of the matter. I can make my affidavy, Curnel; so I hope ye won't be after layin' the blame of the ould man's bad behaviour on me."

"If this young woman's statement be correct, sir," said Colonel Fairfax, "you alone are blameable in this affair."

"Yes, sir, her statement is perfectly correct, and I should be sorry that any act of mine, however innocently meant, should entail any disagreeable consequences on her. Do me the favour, sir, of reading the few lines I addressed to her, and they will explain what now appears inexplicable, or worse."

"Do Curnel, if ye plase, read the bit o' writin'," said Molly, "for as I don't know a letther in the alfy-bit, and can't tell a B from a bull's fut, I'd like to know what the ould man maned."

"I feel in so awkward and embarrassing a position that I must entreat your indulgence, madam," observed Mr. Maclaurin, turning to Mrs. Fairfax, and bowing. "Be assured I had not the least intention of offering any insult or improper advances towards this young woman—my age ought to be my best guarantee against the suspicion of any such intention; but a passion for music, and the gratification which this person's voice afforded me, have led to this embarrassing position, which I greatly regret. I hope, however, that you will permit the young woman to retain the gift offered to her without any evil motive."

Colonel Fairfax opened the letter, and submitted it to his wife, who, having read it, smiled, and told Molly Malowny she was at liberty to accept the offering intended for her. Molly took the five sovereigns, dropped a curtsey to Mr. Maclaurin, and said, "I'm greatly beholden to ye, sir, and if it's my singin' plases ye, sure I'll sing for ye as often as ye like, purvided the Curnel and the misthris has no objection: and I ax yer pardon for shakin' ye so roughly, but what could a dacent girl do in such a case, and I thinking ye were wanting to make game of me?"

Colonel Fairfax and his wife motioned to their nurserymaid to retire, and Mr. Maclaurin, looking heartily ashamed of himself, and truly distressed, bowed to them both, and withdrew.

"Five goolden sovereigns!" said Molly Malowny, as she counted them over. "Well, sure I am a lucky girl; and to have got 'em for nothing at all at all, but jist for singing thim ould songs my granny taught me, and I never thinking that any one in the wide

world was listening to me, except the childer! Yes, indeed, I'm a lucky girl, that's what I am. And, now I think of it, my dhrame is come true; sure didn't I dhrame that I saw a purse of goold in a dog's mouth, and I gave him a bone, and he let the goold fall into my lap. The ould man is the dog, and here, sure enough, is the goold. Faith, I'll sing to him from mornin' till night, if he'll give me such presents as this. Let me see—five and five makes tin, and five is fifteen, and five more would make twenty. If he was to give me three more fives, sure I'd be as rich as a Jew. My fortune would be made, and I might dhress finer than any of them ladies'-maids that turn up their noses at me bekase I'm not as well dhressed as they are. Sure I could buy a silk gown, and a bonnet with flowers in it, and a mantilly like what I see the ladies'-maids wear, walking on the Steyne. What a quare ould gentleman, to knock at my door, and then run away like mad! I gave him a good shakin', though, poor ould man, for I thought he was wanting to play tricks on me. And then the fright I got when I saw the Curnel and my mistress close at my elbow, before I dhreamt they were near me, and they looking so black at me! Well, it's all over now, and they know I wasn't to blame; and I've got the five sovereigns, so it has been a lucky day for me."

## CHAPTER XI.

Unloved, unhonoured, feeble, old,
Worn out in hoarding useless gold,
What now avails the glittering store,
When youth, and health, and peace are o'er?
It cannot lull disease or pain,
Or bring back other days again.
How vain is that for which through years
We've toil'd, a prey to doubts and fears!
How willingly would we bestow
The dross for which no use we know,
Could it but purchase us once more
The feelings that were ours of yore!

When Mr. Maclaurin again found himself in the solitude of his chamber, many gloomy reflections passed through his mind.

"What is the good of all the wealth I have for so many long and

weary years laboured to amass!" thought he. "Has it brought me happiness, or can it afford me enjoyment? I have been so intent on accumulating it, that I forgot to cultivate friendship, or even to form acquaintances: I have outlived my kindred, and stand alone in the world, a solitary, unloved, old man; with no one to lean on in descending the vale of years, no friendly hand to smooth my pillow, no kind companion to cheer my interminable evenings, or to enliven my dull hearth: no one to whose happiness I can contribute, or who cares for mine. My wealth seems to me like a mockery, since it avails me not to secure any one of the mental enjoyments for which my heart yearns. As well might the dying miser, reduced to his desperate state by having denied himself all the comforts, nay, more, the common necessaries of life, find pleasure in the contemplation of the gold which he feels he must soon leave behind him, as for me to find consolation in my wealth under present circumstances. How utterly worthless it now appears, when a trifling portion of it would suffice to furnish the few wants left me! I look with envy on all who have children to care for them in the dreariness of old age, or even friends to lighten by companionship its gloom.

"I dreamt not of all this when I was spending my youth and manhood in the cankering cares entailed by the unceasing toil of money-making. Only let me be rich! was my constant thought, and, when I am so, then will it be time to retire from labour, to take mine ease, and to live surrounded by those comforts and luxuries which I now deny myself. During the first years of my toil, I fixed the period of my retirement from business at that when I should have amassed the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds. My desires were then moderate: young blood circulated briskly in my veins, and health prompted the desire for many enjoyments which prudence denied. All pleasures were postponed until the twenty-five thousand should be my own, and that epoch was impatiently yearned for. It came—slowly, to be sure, but it did come—and then, had I been wise, I might have retired from toil and care, and cultivated love and friendship. But the demon Habit had linked itself with the desire for wealth. I had grown accustomed to privations and solitude; and, when the promptings of avarice led me to continue to toil until I could add another twenty-five thousand to the one already acquired, I mistook it for the suggestion of prudence, and worked on until I became master of half a 'plum.' That gained, I wished to be the possessor of a whole one. I had

grown used to the dreary routine of life, which at first had been so irksome to me; the sap of my existence had dried up, the blood circulated but feebly in my veins, the desire for enjoyment was gone, and I was only appalled by the solitude in which I found myself. My kindred had, one after another, left the earth: I had refused to minister to their wants, or to add to their comforts, until I had first obtained the sum I deemed necessary for the security of my own future support. That sum had been doubled, tripled, quadrupled, and now there was none left who had any claim on my affection to share it. The motive for toil was gone, but the habit of it continued to enslave me.

"Wealth begets wealth; I am now richer, far richer, than I ever expected to be; but what avails it? The solitary pleasure in which I have ever indulged has been music, and my frequent visits to the Opera my only extravagance. But, even then, though the dulcet sounds charmed me, they appealed not to my heart; they touched no chord that vibrated; they awakened no association of the olden time. It was reserved for the notes of the young woman I encountered here to do that; and, ever since I heard her sing, my thoughts are continually recurring to the days of my youth, and my heart craves for a continuance of the sweet though sad emotions her voice called forth from their long and death-like slumber. Could I but secure that voice to soothe my solitude, to bring back the memory of other days, how gladly would I bestow a large portion of my useless wealth in the acquisition! This colonel and his wife, to whom the singing of the Irishwoman affords no pleasure, who are, perhaps, ignorant that she has a fine voice, possess that for which I would pay largely. Why should I not endeavour to obtain it? Yes, I will secure her independence, if she will give up her engagement in the family with whom she now lives, and enter mine. Her service shall be light. I will require nothing from her but to sing to me every evening to lull me to sleep, as she does the children she now tends. Am I not grown into second childhood, and do I not require her song to soothe me as much, ay, and more too, than the innocent creatures to whom the fatigue of the long day's joys and pastimes ensure unbroken repose?"

Such were the cogitations that filled the brain of Maclaurin, as hour after hour rolled away in the solitude of his chamber. Had he noted down his thoughts, they would probably have expressed what we, gentle reader, have done for him; and the result was, that he determined on appealing to Colonel Fairfax, and, after explaining

the dreariness of his position, and the yearning he felt for the voice of his nurserymaid, entreat, as the greatest favour that could be acceded him, that the said nurserymaid should be transferred to his service. But then came the reluctance, the shamefacedness, of laying bare to a man, and a soldier, too—a class which, *par parenthèse*, the shy citizen believed to be made of sterner materials than other men—the secret feelings so long pent up in his withered heart. He shrank from it as most men in a similar state would: for they all know that when sympathy or pity is required, it must not be sought from man. No, he would appeal to Mrs. Fairfax; a woman would understand, would commiserate, his situation, and he remembered and yielded assent to the truth of the lines:—

> "In woman's breast hath
> Pity made its home."

Yes, he would reveal to Mrs. Fairfax all that had passed in his mind relative to her nurserymaid, and, as he recalled the gentle expression of that lady's countenance, he felt assured she would put no harsh interpretation on his views or conduct. He seized a pen to write to her, but, as he opened his blotting-book, Molly Malowny commenced a song often heard in his youthful days, and every note of which was fondly remembered. How strange is the power of association! The very tone and pronunciation peculiar to the class of the singer, in general so far from agreeable to the ears of the natives of other countries, sounded most pleasantly to his, for the rich brogue reminded him of the accents heard in childhood—the happiest, indeed the only happy, days of his existence. Whether it was the joy occasioned by the gift of the five guineas, a larger sum than she had ever previously possessed, or the desire of pleasing Mr. Maclaurin, whom she knew to be in the next room, which influenced the songstress, we cannot take upon ourselves to say, but never before had Molly Malowny sang so well as when her clear melodious voice poured on the following ditty:—

> "O, Honour, honey, but love is honny
> A little while when it's just quite new;
> But when it's old, love, it does grow cold, love,
> And melts away like the morning dew.
>
> In days gone by, love, when thou wert nigh, love,
> My looks, my thoughts, all were turned to thee:
> And when we parted, oh! broken-hearted,
> I prayed that death soon would set me free.

And thou didst swear, love, that thou wouldst e'er, love,
Continue faithful and true to me;
That no persuasion should e'er occasion
Thy heart to change in its constancy.

At length returning, my bosom burning
With all the love of departed years,
I flew to meet thee, once more to greet thee
With words of fondness—with smiles and tears.

We met—oh! never, if I live for ever,
Shall I forget thy calm, careless glance,
The look of coldness that checked the boldness
Of my too warm and assured advance.

At first in anguish did I weep and languish,
And mourn thy falseness with bitter tears;
But soon from thee, love, I learn'd to see, love,
How vain are passion's sweet hopes and fears."

The old man became positively enraptured as he listened, and so greatly did her song excite him that he plucked up courage to request an interview with Mrs. Fairfax, instead of communicating with her on paper, a task which he somewhat dreaded, from being conscious that he was little skilled in the epistolary art. He rang the bell, and sent the waiter who answered his summons with a request to be permitted to wait upon Mrs. Fairfax. An assent being given, he quickly availed himself of it, and the mild countenance and gentle manner of that lady so much assured him that he soon conquered his habitual shyness and nervous hesitation, and made her acquainted with his feelings. The most eloquent description of his loneliness and isolation might have produced less effect than the plain and simple exposition of it made by him. Her feelings became interested for the old recluse, and as she compared *his* position with her own, blessed with a loving and beloved companion, and with children who gave her a new interest in life, she learned to pity still more deeply the being who, with all his wealth, had no one to cheer the dreariness of old age, or to watch with tenderness over its decline.

"Had I but your servant to sing to me, madam, I should be content; and if you would only resign her to me, you would for ever insure my gratitude," said Mr. Maclaurin.

"I pledged myself to her mother, from whose roof I received her, that I would not part from her while she conducted herself properly, and that, if I ever became dissatisfied with her, I would send her back to her parents. To resign her to you merely that she might sing would be to expose her to the certainty of contracting

habits of idleness, and this I could not reconcile it to my conscience to do."

"My housekeeper, an old and steady woman, would perhaps find employment for her—give her sewing, or something light for her to work at, madam."

"It is to be feared, sir, that a young woman aware that she was chosen for her voice would be but little disposed to follow the dictates of your housekeeper, and the introduction of Molly Malowny into your house would most likely lead to many disagreeable scenes with your old servants."

"Molly Malowny, did you say, madam? Where—from what part of Ireland does she come?"

"I engaged her, sir, at Kilkenny, near to which place her family reside."

"Yes, it is—it must be so. She must be the daughter of Molly Malowny—my first, my only love."

"She is the grand-daughter of a person of that name, sir," replied Mrs. Fairfax, "and inherits her fine voice, though not her good looks, for I have seen the old woman, who even still retains a considerable portion of the beauty for which she is said to have been once remarkable, though so far advanced in life."

"Ah, madam, it is no wonder the tones of the voice and the old songs produced such an effect on my feelings. I must not lose sight of this young woman: I would rather give up thousands—ay, tens of thousands, than not have her to sing to me; I would rather —yes, by all that is good, I would do that which would make all who know me laugh, and call me an old fool in his dotage. I would mar—yes, marry her, rather than lose that voice which brings back the memory of the only happy days of my life to me."

Mrs. Fairfax started with surprise.

"I see you are startled, madam, at the thought of my marrying a servant. But, consider, I am alone in the world; known only on the Exchange as the rich old Maclaurin, whose threshold neither friend or acquaintance ever crosses. What care I who may laugh, provided I have one honest heart to be grateful to me, and that sweet voice to cheer me? Yes, madam, I see it is the only way to secure the blessing I crave. The entrance of Molly into my house in any other character than that of its mistress—as my wife —would be attended with many annoyances to her and to me from my old servants, who have grown self-willed, but my marriage with her will remove all difficulties. But, perhaps, *she* may object;

and the poor old man looked as alarmed as if he thought the poor nurserymaid, with the scanty wages of eight guineas a-year, would be likely to refuse the rich Mr. Maclaurin.

Mrs. Fairfax smiled, and said she did not think that Molly, who was a very prudent woman, would refuse so advantageous a marriage. "Nevertheless," resumed she, "would it not be as well for you to take some time for consideration, before you make her the offer? Would it not be right to consult some friend?"

"I have no friend, madam; and on this occasion I am glad I have not, for a friend would be sure to advise me against what he would call an imprudent marriage, but which, I know, will give me one gleam of happiness before I die. I repeat to you, madam, I am alone in the world."

"Molly, though a virtuous and well-disposed young woman, is totally uneducated—she can neither read nor write."

"No matter, madam, no matter: I shall not require her to do either. I shall ask nothing at her hands except to sing to me; nothing else, positively nothing."

"Before I take any step, you must allow me to consult my husband."

Colonel Fairfax entered the room precisely at this moment, and his wife, with peculiar tact and delicacy, explained to him the purport of Mr. Maclaurin's visit.

"If the singing of our nurserymaid is the sole cause of your preference, allow me to observe, sir," said Colonel Fairfax, "that you might meet with many young persons, accomplished musicians, and well-educated, who, I doubt not, would be happy to become your wife, without your contracting a marriage which must be considered derogatory to a gentleman of your wealth."

"Perhaps I might, sir, perhaps I might. There are always, and so much the worse, plenty of poor young women, well born and brought up, who, for sake of bread, would marry an infirm old man like me, in preference to earning a precarious subsistence as governesses to tiresome children, or companions to ill-tempered old women. But their singing, however fine and scientific it might be, could not produce the same effect on my feelings—could not transport me back to the days of my youth, and bring before me scenes vanished long years ago from my mind."

Colonel Fairfax suggested, as his wife had previously done, the prudence of Mr. Maclaurin's consulting some friend, and of not deciding on so grave a step as matrimony, before he had taken due

time for reflection; but the old man was firm, and declared that, if Molly Malowny would accept his hand, nothing should prevent his marrying her.

"If you, madam, who have been so kind and indulgent in listening to my statement, will condescend to question this young woman, leaving to her free and unbiassed choice whether she will become my wife or not, you will add to the obligations I already owe you; and if you will question her in my presence, that I may judge whether she feels any repugnance to accept my offer, I shall be still more obliged."

The bell was rung, Molly Malowny was summoned, and in a few minutes after she made her appearance. But who shall paint her joy and surprise when her mistress explained to her the intentions of Mr. Maclaurin in her favour!

"And is it in earnest the good ould gentleman is, ma'am?" asked Molly.

"Quite so," replied Mr. Maclaurin.

"Why, then, if that's the case, faith here's my hand, and welcome. God bless you for a nice kind ould gentleman, and long may ye live to reign over us! I'm ready and willing—and proud, too, into the bargain—to become yer honour's lawful wife. Sure it's a great favour and honour, and one I never could expect, and never will forget; but I hope you won't take me away from the Curnel's childer until my misthris—and a good kind one she has been to me—has purvided herself with another nurserymaid in my place."

This trait of simplicity and gratitude pleased Mr. Maclaurin, who entreated that Mrs. Fairfax would be so obliging as to order for Molly a wardrobe suitable to the position she was going to fill, and, with the Colonel's consent, condescend to be present at the nuptials.

The requests were graciously complied with, and Molly, half wild with joy, seized the old man's hand and kissed it, saying, "Long may ye live, ye jewel of an ould gentleman! Sure 'twas a happy day for me when my songs pleased ye, and that I first set me eyes on the ould face of ye! Won't there be rejoicing at Ballamacrash, when they hear the news that Molly Malowny is going to be married to a gentleman—a *raal* gentleman, that sits down in the presence of the Curnel and the misthris, and who keeps a body servant! They'll never believe it, that they won't, unless they see it under the Curnel's own hand. Oh! cushla ma chree! what a pity it is I can't write to them and tell them my luck!"

"You mentioned Ballamacrash, I think; do you come from there?"

"Arragh, don't I! Faith, and I do, and all my people before me. Sure I never left it 'till I came to the Curnel's family, and a lucky day that same was. Oh! when my granny hears of it, she'll be for jumping out of her skin with joy. 'Go to England, Molly,' says she, 'though, troth, I'm loth to part from ye; but, if the Curnel and his lady will take ye, go, for England is a great place, and many a one that goes there makes a fortune. Was not there Mr. Patrick Maclaurin—the Lord forgive him for all the grief he has caused me!'"—Mr. Maclaurin started—"'went there when he was a gorsoon, and people say he made heaps of goold; and there are many others also who made their fortune in that big city, London.' When oncest poor granny began to spake of Mr. Patrick Maclaurin, it wasn't asy to stop her, for the ould love had left a nest-egg in the poor heart of her, which, though never hatched, was still presarved." Mr. Maclaurin shook his head slowly, and sighed. "Granny thought as much of Mr. Patrick as if he was the Lord Leftenant—yes, faith, and more—as if he was Mr. O'Connell himself. Sure, as she often tould me, she refused to marry an honest boy, thinking all along that Mr. Patrick would come back and marry her when he had made a fortune! not, as she owned, that ever he had said he would; but, when a man says he loves a girl, sure what else can she expect, even though he comes of genteeler people than her? But, after she waited twelve years without even so much as hearing from him, she was persuaded to marry my grandfather, who knew that, though she had loved Mr. Patrick, she never forgot that unless he married her she could be nothing to him. And, while my grandfather lived—and he didn't die till he was an ould man—she never mentioned the name of Mr. Patrick; but afterwards, and especially since she has grown so ould, she likes to be talking of the time when she was a girl, and Mr. Patrick loved her, which is strange enough, for she can't remember things that happened much later."

The prolix reminiscences of Molly were patiently listened to by Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax, but most attentively and with deep interest by Mr. Maclaurin.

"Yes," said he, "your grandmother was a good and a virtuous woman."

"And did ye know her, sir?" asked Molly.

"I knew her well, for I am the Patrick Maclaurin of whom you heard her speak."

"And is it possible? Well, who'd have thought it! And is it yerself that is the ould sweetheart my granny used to be croonin* after? But sure you must be greatly althered, for she used to say ye were as fine and purty a boy as could be seen in all Ireland. But ould age spoils every one."

Molly felt, as soon as she had uttered this thoughtless truth, that she had done wrong, and immediately tried to rectify it by adding:—

"But sure we'll all grow ould; and, though ye're not so young as ye were fifty years ago, ye're still a mighty comely ould gentleman, troth and ye are, though I say it that oughtn't to say it, bekase I'll soon be yer wife."

It was evident that Mr. Maclaurin was infinitely less pleased with his bride elect's conversational powers than with her vocal ones, which he evinced by betraying several symptoms of dissatisfaction during her reminiscences of her grandmother. Though far from refined, he was nevertheless struck by the extreme coarseness of Molly's tone and manner, and it was only the recollection of her charming voice that reconciled him to the step he had already taken, and the irrevocable one he had arranged to take.

"Would it not be best, sir, that your marriage should be solemnized in London?" observed Mrs. Fairfax.

"Perhaps so, perhaps so; yet"—and he hesitated—"I should rather not return home to Finsbury Square until after my marriage. My housekeeper, Mrs. Macgillacuddy, is rather a termagant," and here the old man looked alarmed. "Old servants, you know, madam, think themselves privileged, and I would rather avoid her reflections previous to the event. Once it has occurred, she will feel that it is useless to give them utterance, and will either continue to discharge her duty quietly, or leave my service."

"Ah, then, is it afeard of yer ould housekeeper ye are?" interrupted Molly. "Never mind her, ayllaun,** let me alone for takin' yer part. I'll soon take the pride out of her if she begins to be saucy, I can tell her," and Molly's countenance lighted up with anger.

"No, no, you must let her alone. I would not have any quarrels in my house on any account; and Mrs. Macgillacuddy and Donald are great friends, and would combine directly, and disturb my comfort, if either of them were provoked."

* Lamenting over the memory of. ** My dear.

"Lord love ye for a good ould soul! Little I'd mind either of them, or both put together, if my blood was up; and only let me hear them offend ye, and if I don't give them tit for tat, and butter for fish, my name isn't Molly Malowny! I'll stand to ye, ye ould duck of a man, that I will; so fear no one."

Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax found it difficult to control their risible faculties, while Molly was promising to afford support and protection to her future spouse, who seemed to entertain almost as great a dread of her as of Mrs. Macgillacuddy.

"You could go to an hotel in London and remain there until after the marriage is performed," said Mrs. Fairfax, pitying the nervous old man's embarrassment.

"But then, madam, I could not have the satisfaction of your and the Colonel's presence, to which I attach great importance."

"I shall have business in London in a few days," observed Colonel Fairfax, "and it will put me to very little inconvenience to remain there until after the ceremony takes place."

"A thousand thanks, sir! a thousand thanks! I shall never forget your and this lady's kindness," and he bowed lowly to Mrs. Fairfax.

"If I might suggest a plan," said the Colonel.

"Certainly, sir, certainly."

"It would be, that we immediately provide ourselves with a successor to Molly, and consign her to the care of an humble but respectable friend of ours in London—an excellent woman, who was many years the companion of Mrs. Fairfax's mother, and who will, at our request, not hesitate to receive her. This plan will preclude any observations being made on the station of your future wife, who, marrying out of the house of a lady in whose establishment she has filled no menial capacity, will enter yours in a manner more befitting your position in life."

"An excellent plan, sir, a most excellent plan, and I am deeply indebted to you for the suggestion."

"We will leave Brighton to-morrow, take Molly with us, place her with Mrs. Middleton, the lady mentioned, and you can follow as soon as you please."

Mr. Maclaurin took his leave, but, when quitting the room, Molly approached him, and dropping a low curtsey, said, "I'm greatly obliged to ye, sir; and when we're married I'll do my best to please ye, and make ye happy, for sure it's a proud and a great day for the likes o' me to be chosen by a nice ould gentleman like ye to be his lawful wife."

Mr. Maclaurin nodded to her good-naturedly, and desired, with much more the air of a master than of a suitor, that she would not expose herself to cold lest her voice should be injured, letting it be plainly seen that he only preferred her for this attraction.

Mrs. Fairfax was no sooner left alone than she commenced giving Molly good advice on her future conduct, but, although it was respectfully received, it was evident that the ignorant girl was too much elated with her good luck, as she styled it, to profit as much as she ought by such counsel.

"Oh! then, ma'am, only think what a surprise 'twill be at Ballamacrash when they hear that I am married to a gentleman who keeps a body sarvant, and has a great fortune! I wonder what will Nancy O'Shea and Biddy Hoolaghan say to it? They that used to be jibing me, bekase I wasn't as purty as they are. How jealous they'll be, to be sure! And the boys that used to look down on me, too—Paddy Murphy, Tim Callaghan, and Rody Maguire, that wouldn't dance with me at the Patherns, bekase they said I was ugly. I'd like to know how they'll look when they see me dhressed for all the world like a raal lady, with an elegant veil over my face, and a pocket handkercher trimmed with lace in one hand, and a fine smelling-bottle in the other, like the grand lady I saw in a carriage the other day."

"Think not of such trifles," said Mrs. Fairfax. "Think only of showing your gratitude to Mr. Maclaurin."

"Troth, ma'am, I'll do my best to show it; but it's only natural that I should think of the surprise and envy of all them that used to be crowing over me, when they come to know that I'm almost equal to a raal lady! And, ma'am, as the ould gentleman said I might have new clothes, I'd be so thankful if you'd let me buy a gown I saw in a shop-window yesterday. It's a most elegant dhress, quite fit for a lady—a yellow ground, with scarlet sthripes, and green sprigs between 'em."

Mrs. Fairfax could not forbear smiling at Molly's taste, but told her that, as they were to proceed to London next day, it would be useless to make any purchases at Brighton.

"Do not mention it to any one here," said Mrs. Fairfax, "that you are going to be married."

"Mayn't I tell it to the lady's-maid in the next room to me, who looks so haughty whenever she meets me, just for all the world as if I was not fit to be spoken to?"

"No, you must not name it."

"Oh! what a pity, for she would be so vexed! But I hope, ma'am, you'll let me tell it to the chambermaid, for she is a mighty dacent civil girl."

"No Molly, I must interdict your naming it to any one."

"Well then, ma'am, I won't tell it, but it's very hard to keep a secret that, if known, would vex so many. Troth, it's mighty hard," and Molly sighed deeply.

If, while reflecting on his engagement, any doubts of its wisdom crossed the mind of Mr. Maclaurin during the remainder of the day, they vanished when he retired to his bed-chamber, and heard Molly pour forth one of her Irish songs. Her voice, somewhat tremulous from joy, sounded more sweetly than ever in his ears; and he forgot the plain face, uncouth figure, strong brogue, and vulgar manners of his syren, in the delight her singing afforded him. And this rich and dulcet voice was henceforth to be at his command—was to soothe him to repose, and to awaken him from slumber! Yes, he was glad that he had decided on possessing it at any price; and with this feeling of satisfaction he resigned himself to sleep.

## CHAPTER XII.

"Oh, weak old man! and wilt thou take for wife,
To have and hold through all the years of life,
A creature rude, unfashioned, in whose mind
A sympathy with thine thou ne'er can'st find?
'Tis folly, madness, thus, in thine old age,
In such unsuited wedlock to engage.
Pause, and bethink thee ere it be too late,
And thou may'st still escape a wretched fate."

Two days after the departure of Colonel Fairfax and his family from Brighton, Mr. Maclaurin also left it, and, contrary to his former intention, returned to his own house, instead of going to an hotel. Having come back a week sooner than he was expected, his housekeeper was at little pains to conceal the displeasure she felt at this unusual proceeding of his.

"Gude troth, sir," said she in her shrillest tone, "I think ye might have just sent a wee line or two to say ye were a coming hame, and not tak a body by surpreese, when aw things are at saxes

and sevens. Ye maun blame yersel, and na' ither folk, for finding naethin in it's place; its nae my fault, and it's unco' hard that a puir body is to be fashed because ye dinna ken yer ain mind."

"Hold your tongue, and don't plague me," replied Mr. Maclaurin, with a courage he had not for many years displayed, for, angry at finding his house in a state of discomfort, he was by no means disposed to submit to the ill-humour of Mrs. Macgillacuddy.

"Haud my tongue! And is it e'en come to this? I did na' expect that, after thirty-sax years o' hard service, and in my auld age, I was to be tauld to haud my tongue by a maister I have served wi mickle zeal and honesty; but there's nae gratitude now-a-days, and faithful servitors meet but an unco' bad return from those they hae toiled, and moiled, and worked late and early for."

Mr. Maclaurin walked away from the angry house-keeper, muttering something only half intelligible about his determination to be master of his own house.

"And a puir hand ye'll make o' being maister in yer ain hoose," said Mrs. Macgillacuddy; "much ye ken about managing, puir auld body! But I'll gang to Donald, and hear what's the meaning of aw this ill-humour? There maun be something mair than's common in the wind that the auld man taks on for my telling him a wee bit o' my mind, when he never during thirty-sax years was fashed at it before."

Donald told his old friend and fellow-servant all he knew—nay, more, all he suspected. She turned up her eyes, and raised her hands in utter astonishment at the narration. "And sae ye're to be turned awa, because ye'll nae earn the wages o' sin and help the auld demented body to corrupt the lassie wi' his goold. I ne'er heard the like. Wae's me to hae seen the day! But, if ye gang awa, Donald, it shall never be said that Moggy Macgillacuddy let ye depart alane. I'll e'en gang wi' ye to Scotland, and we maun get the blessing o' the kirk, and wi' the savings I hae in the funds, and I've a matter of twa thousand pounds, joined to yer ain savings, we may be comfortable in our auld age, and leave this wicked auld body to suffer for his ingratitude."

"But the leegacies, Moggy, the leegacies! If we gang awa, he'll nae leave us a bawbee. I ken him weel, and our thirty-sax years o' hard labour will have gone for naething."

"It's vara true, Donald, vara true. It's hard to lose the reward o' sae mony years' toil and trouble; and especially after we hae been maister and meestress here so long; he never meddling nor

interfering in the management, never looking at the beels, nor finding faut wi' what we deed. We were the maisters in aw, except finding the siller; and we had, I maun say, a vast deal o' pickings and savings, one way or anither. We're unco' young, too, to leave off service, and gie up the hope of the leegacies. The auld body canna last long. Why, he's a matter o' seven years aulder than I am, and three aulder than yoursel, Donald."

"Ye're in error, Moggy, that's what ye are. The auld maister has five years mair than me; and, as to yersel, I dinna believe ye hae a day less than my ain age, sae dinna be setting up to be sae young, for it's unco' reediculous."

"Hoot awa, mon! dinna be trying to pass yersel off as being my age. I'd hae ye to ken that I'm mickle younger. Ye could munch yer oat cake and cook your parritch before I ever opened my een in this world o' care, and, if I thought o' marrying ye, it was because folk say a man should be mony years aulder that his wife; tho' I don't know why, for we women folk wear much better than the men, wha, puir bodies, look auld and worn out, while we are fresh and youthful-looking. But I suppose it makes them unco' eeviler to see us sae comely; and ye ken, for wha does not, that yer sect is maun deesposed to be teeranical."

Here the sound of the bell of Mr. Maclaurin interrupted the angry rejoinder Donald was about to utter, a rejoinder that would probably have broken off for ever the matrimonial projects so long entertained by both, and the execution of which was only postponed until the death of their master should leave them at liberty to unite their fortunes and return to Scotland; so the housekeeper was left solus to reflect on the juvenile pretensions of Donald, and to smile with contempt at his doubts of the correctness of her statement relative to her own age.

"Donald," said Mr. Maclaurin, "I sent for you to say that it is not my intention to retain you or Mrs. Macgillacuddy any longer in my service; but, as you have both served me faithfully for many years, I mean to reward you with a gift of five hundred pounds each, the sum I had intended to bequeath you in my will. A person to take your place, and a housekeeper to fill hers, will be here in a week. You will both deliver up to your successors all that you have in your charge, and, that done, I will fulfil the promise I have now made you."

"Ye maun just do as you please, sir. I'm fashed, sairly fashed, ta leave ye, and sae will Mrs. Macgillacuddy be also, but if 'tis yer

pleesure that we should gang from yer hoose, why we maun e'en do as ye wish, but it's a sair trial to us baith." And Donald took out his handkerchief and held it to his eyes, believing that this display of his sensibility and attachment could not fail to melt his old master to pity, and perhaps induce him to revoke the sentence of dismissal.

Mr. Maclaurin had, however, determined on getting rid of his two servants, being well aware that his marriage would draw on him, not only their animadversions, but the expression of their sentiments, which for many years they had most unceremoniously been wont to utter. He felt that his wife ought to find at his house servants wholly unacquainted with her former condition, and prepared to treat her with respect: and from neither Donald, who knew her in her menial capacity, nor Mrs Macgillacuddy, to whom he would be sure to communicate his knowledge of her original position, could the future Mrs. Maclaurin hope for the deference due from domestics to their mistress. Through the aid of Colonel Fairfax and his kind-hearted wife, suitable servants were to be engaged for the new *ménage*, and this arrangement being concluded, Mr. Maclaurin felt a little more at his ease. He was astonished to find how polite and respectful his old servant Donald and the housekeeper had grown ever since he had given them notice to quit, and he was not a little pleased and proud of his own courage in thus vanquishing two persons, who, truth to say, had for thirty-six years made him feel that they were more masters of his house than he was. They were perfectly astounded at his determination, and longed, especially Mrs. Macgillacuddy, to give utterance to the bitter sarcasms which occurred to her on the occasion. But prudence and self-interest, the best checks to bad temper, or, at least, to the exhibition of it towards those who can punish it by withholding pecuniary assistance, operated so promptly on the mind of the irascible old housekeeper, that not the least symptom of her anger was revealed, and civil speeches and smooth looks met her master whenever she crossed his path.

The *trousseau* of *Miss Malowny*, as Molly was now styled, was commanded by Mrs. Fairfax, and Mr. Maclaurin paid a daily visit to his bride elect, who sank for him the whole *répertoire* of her Irish ballads to his infinite satisfaction. Her hostess had, at the request of Mrs. Fairfax, undertaken to instruct her in the first rudiments of politeness, and the common usages of society. She, above all things, recommended the adoption of a reserved and subdued

manner, and an avoidance of loquacity, as the best means of not exposing Miss Malowny's want of education and ignorance of the rules of good breeding. Molly exhibited a praiseworthy docility in attending to the counsel of the worthy Mrs. Middleton, though she would sometimes ask that lady whether Mr. Maclaurin might not take it ill if she did not make herself agreeable.

"Sure, ma'am, it isn't mannerly for the woman of a house to sit like a mum-chance, as they say in Ireland, instead of talkin' an' laughin', an' jokin' and makin' every wan around her welcome and merry."

The mildness and good sense of Mrs. Middleton soon won the confidence and regard of the unsophisticated Irishwoman, and Mr. Maclaurin observed with pleasure that his future wife became more civilized under her tuition. Mrs. Fairfax, too, took a lively interest in her *ci-devant* nurserymaid, instructed her how to dress, and, by example, not less than by precept, effected a great reformation in the appearance and manner of Miss Malowny.

"Oh! then, ma'am, it's yourself that's the jewel of a woman—of a lady, I meant to say—and sure ye're a rale one, and no mistake, to be taching the likes o' me to behave genteelly. If I could but rade and write, the rest would come aisy to me, and I'd study hard to learn how to spake proper, and be able to read a prayer-book, for sure 'twould look quite as if I was a born lady to see me reading my prayers."

"Mrs. Middleton will, I am sure, have no objection to instruct you," replied Mrs. Fairfax; and that day Molly was provided with a copy-book and copper-plate to commence her lessons. The alphabet was soon mastered, but the spelling somewhat tried the patience of both mistress and pupil. But what will not perseverance achieve? and Molly's was truly indefatigable. Mrs. Fairfax often found it difficult to restrain her inclination to laugh when she found Miss Malowny, book in hand, with a triumphant air spelling "ab, eb, ib, ob, ub," and then Molly would say—"Oh! then, ma'am, isn't it myself that's coming on finely with my lessons! just ax Mrs. Middleton whether I am not an attentive scholard."

At length the day fixed on for the celebration of the nuptial ceremony arrived, and Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax and Mrs. Middleton were present at it. Molly conducted herself with great propriety until the clergyman asked whether she would take Patrick Maclaurin to be her husband, etc., when she answered, "Faith, that I will, please your reverence, for what else brought me here but to

marry him?"—a reply that made all present, not even excepting the clergyman himself, smile: but a keen observer must have noticed that Mr. Maclaurin's cheeks grew red with shame. The *happy* couple, as every newly-married pair is called in newspaper phrase, went to pass the honeymoon at Southend, and the bride beguiled the time spent on the road so agreeably by her singing that the bridegroom was in the happiest frame of mind imaginable, and congratulated himself on having secured for life one whose notes charmed him more than all the bank-notes he had for so many years toiled to acquire. So great was his satisfaction that, on his return home, he invested in the funds a thousand pounds for each of Colonel Fairfax's two children, and presented a silver soup tureen and four silver covered dishes to the Colonel, with a handsome necklace, pair of earrings, and bracelets, to Mrs. Fairfax, as marks of his sense of their kindness to his wife. Nor was Mrs. Middleton forgotten. Mr. Maclaurin put a five hundred pound note into her hand the morning of his marriage, and pressed her, as a favour, to become a guest at his house as frequently as her convenience would admit.

Behold Mrs. Maclaurin now established in Finsbury Square, surrounded by every comfort, for her husband's heart opened by the magical key, music, that humanizer of stubborn ones, he was now disposed to be as generous as he had hitherto been sordid. Money was forwarded to his wife's family in Ireland, to render their position there more respectable, and nothing was wanting to Molly's happiness but the power of writing a full account of her grandeur, as she styled it, to her former friends and companions, for the express purpose, as she confessed, of exciting their envy and jealousy at her good fortune. The wish of confounding her late fellow-servants by exhibiting her finery often occurred to her: but the prudent advice of Mrs. Middleton, who became a frequent guest at Finsbury Square, precluded the indulgence of this vulgar desire. Three hours a-day, while her husband was at his counting-house, were devoted by Mrs. Maclaurin to the acquisition of reading and writing under the tuition of Mrs. Middleton, and the evenings were given to music, the old husband growing every hour more partial to the songs of his young and simple wife, and more indulgent to her. Great was her joy, when at length she could peruse a child's story-book, and was able to write her name. Mrs. Middleton had some difficulty to make her understand that she was to write Mary instead of Molly Maclaurin; but, when it was explained to her that Mary was the

genteel mode, she adopted it, nay, requested Mr. Maclaurin to call her thenceforth by that name. The servants engaged for the Finsbury Square establishment were not slow in detecting that their mistress was not, as they said, "much of a lady," or long accustomed to the comforts and elegances of life which she now enjoyed. Her exultation in their possession, and her ostentation in displaying them, convinced the four domestics that the old man had made a low match, and, with this conviction, they were well disposed to take liberties with their new mistress, which they dared not contemplate indulging in had they not felt assured of her ignorance and vulgarity. But soon did they find themselves checked in their first advances towards impertinence by the intrepid Mrs. Maclaurin who quickly discovered the slights aimed at her, and as quickly resented them with a degree of warmth and determination that precluded any future attempts of the same kind, although the aggressors remained still more convinced of the low origin of their mistress by the very anger their conduct had excited in her breast. "A real lady," said one of them, talking over the affair, "would never have seen what we were driving at; but, if we intend to keep our places, and, as times go, it is the wisest thing we can do, it will be necessary for us not to let her see that we know she is no more a gentlewoman than ourselves."

"Marry come up, indeed," said the housemaid, who also enacted the *rôle* of *femme de chambre* to her mistress, "I'd be very sorry to be no genteeler than her! Why, if she was a lady, would she ask me every time she puts on a new dress, or cap, or bonnet, whether I ever saw such elegant ones before, and whether she isn't a lucky woman to have such a power of fine things? It's my opinion that she was a ballad-singer in the streets, and that the old man took a fancy to and married her for her singing."

"I'm sure you are right," said the cook. "I thought I remembered her face; and, now I think of it, I'm sure I saw her singing before our door in my last place."

The judicious advice of Mrs. Middleton preserved Mrs. Maclaurin from the commission of many follies, and so far weighed with her as to induce her to observe the utmost respect and attention towards her husband. Nevertheless, the natural disposition and froward temper of the lady remained unchanged, and it required no little exertion of self-control to prevent the ebullition of the latter from interrupting the peace of her aged partner. Mrs. Middleton had expected that, when Mrs. Maclaurin was enabled to read fluently,

she would take a pleasure in the perusal of good books, and therefore selected for her a choice number of volumes. The worthy woman was, however, disappointed in this expectation, for after having looked over a few pages of each, her pupil declared that, instead of affording her any amusement, they quite "bothered" her, and that the newspaper was the only thing she liked to read, for she there found an account of lords, and ladies, and fine parties.

"I thought," observed Mrs. Middleton, "from your impatience to learn to read, that you wished to study."

"Not I, faith," replied Mrs. Maclaurin; "I only wanted to be able to read my prayer-book in church, without the danger of being laughed at for turning it upside down, as I was when at Mrs. Fairfax's by her maid, when, not wishing to let that consaited creature see that I couldn't read, I pretended to do so; and I learned to write only to be able to let all my old friends in Ireland know how much better off I am than they ever will be."

This *naïve* confession of her pupil's incitement to learn astonished and disgusted Mrs. Middleton, and she endeavoured to make her comprehend the amusement as well as advantages to be derived from the study of history and *belles-lettres.*

"What will history teach me except a pack of old stories about people dead and gone, that I don't care about, half of which mayn't be true, and, if true, that I wouldn't give a pin to know; but as for Bell's letters, if they are anything like Bell's Life in London, which I saw the other day in the servants' pantry, I wouldn't object to read it now and then, for it seemed mighty entertaining."

Mrs. Middleton found all her efforts to correct the native vulgarity and coarseness of Mrs. Maclaurin unavailing. She was incorrigible; so her kind instructress was compelled to be satisfied with the progress her limited capacity allowed her to make in acquiring a less vulgar mode of expressing her sentiments, though she could not elevate them, and in gradually assuming a more refined tone and bearing than could have been expected in one so exceedingly coarse and illiterate as Mrs. Maclaurin had originally been. She observed with great surprise how little interest Mr. Maclaurin evinced in the mental improvement of his wife, and in this point the extreme selfishness of the old man was very apparent. Provided that she was ready to sing him to sleep in his easy chair every evening, he was content, and required no other exercise of her conjugal duty or affection: but if a cold, or any other indisposi-

tion, impaired her voice, he betrayed his annoyance with little regard to the suffering which she might have to endure, seeming to consider her as a musical instrument, on which so much of his happiness depended that it must not be out of tune. Luckily for his comfort, Mrs. Maclaurin's was a very robust constitution, so that her voice was rarely affected by the changes in temperature which influence so much the voices of others, and he was seldom deprived of his evening's solace, and consequently did not regret the extraordinary marriage he had made. His wife, however, was less satisfied; she wished for a larger theatre to exhibit her fine clothes and riches; the admiration of her servants did not suffice to satisfy her growing vanity; but her husband pertinaciously adhered to his long-established habit of seclusion, and permitted no visiters, except Mrs. Middleton and one or two of his old clerks, who were occasionally invited to partake the Sunday's dinner.

"I would not mind being shut up in this manner," would Mrs. Maclaurin say to Mrs. Middleton, "if I had not such elegant clothes to wear. But what's the good of being finely dressed, when there's no one but you, the ould clerks, and the servants to see me?"

But, though discontented, she had the prudence to conceal every symptom of the feeling from her *caro sposo*, who, three years after their nuptials, was snatched from this life by an apoplectic fit, while listening to one of his favourite songs, after having partaken somewhat too largely of turtle soup that day at dinner. On opening his will, made but a few months previously, it was found that the whole of his vast wealth, with the exception of a legacy of five thousand pounds to Colonel Fairfax, half that sum to Mrs. Middleton, and a thousand to each of his clerks, was bequeathed to his widow. In the joy occasioned by the acquisition of this wealth, all regret for the donor was forgotten; and Mrs. Middleton, for the first time, began to be aware that her *ci-devant* pupil was neither so kind-hearted nor grateful as she ought to be. Her opinion, however, had now little weight with the rich widow, who, much sooner than decency permitted, commenced asserting her independence of all advice, and her aversion to those who were prone to offer it.

No sooner were the mortal remains of her husband consigned to the grave than Mrs. Maclaurin declared her intention of proceeding to Brighton, and commanded a splendid chariot to be built for her, and every other adjunct suitable to a lady of large fortune to be prepared. She refused to adopt the ordinary dress worn by widows, saying, it looked mean and poor, and attired herself in the richest

velvets and satins, trimmed with an abundance of black lace, adhering only to the colour for mourning, but rejecting the customary materials. At Brighton, her ostentation and singularity of manners and costume attracted all eyes. Her wealth was magnified tenfold by public rumour, and her low origin gave rise to a hundred tales, each, if possible, more absurd than the other. By one report she was said to have been a gipsy, whom the old merchant in his dotage had met on a common in Hampshire. By another she was asserted to have been a ballad-singer, whom he encountered in the streets—in short, there was no end to the stories invented and circulated about her. She was followed, stared and laughed at; and this notoriety, instead of displeasing or embarrassing her, gratified her vanity, and encouraged her to commit still greater follies. She had a levee of milliners and dressmakers every morning at her hotel, and exhibited all the airs and insolence peculiar to a *parvenue* without education or good taste. But, though people ridiculed the vulgar widow and her absurd finery, among the scoffers persons were not wanting who were disposed to offer homage to the rich Mrs. Maclaurin. Wealth, in all countries duly appreciated, is nowhere paid such court to as in England; and the possessor, whatever may be his or her defects, is sure to receive a courtesy which persons of the highest merit without fortune have little chance of meeting. Even those who laughed at the illiterate language and coarse manners of Mrs. Maclaurin refused not to associate with her; such is the power which wealth exercises over the generality of people. One lady excused herself to her acquaintances for visiting the rich widow, on the plea that she had a relation, an excellent young man, without fortune, for whom she would be an admirable wife: another had a brother, or nephew; and even those who had no wife-seeking male connexion to offer as an apology for making the acquaintance of Mrs. Maclaurin urged a numerous family of daughters, ill-provided for, to one of whom so rich and lonely a woman might be very likely to take a fancy, and portion off. There was not a ruined spendthrift bachelor or gay adventurer at Brighton who did not build hopes and form schemes on the rich widow, and flock around her, intent to please.

Though elated beyond measure at a success that far exceeded her most sanguine expectations, Mrs. Maclaurin was by no means disposed to barter her independence for a husband, unless one presented himself with an aristocratic title. A real lady, as she termed it, she was determined to be, in order that she might have a coro-

not on her carriage, a distinction which, now that she had achieved a large fortune, appeared to her to be the most enviable possible. Yes, she would wed only a lord, and she smiled in contempt at the vain efforts to conciliate her favour made by the mercenary suitors who flocked around her.

The notoriety attached to her at Brighton followed her to London, where, taking up her abode in a fashionable hotel, she engaged a double box at the Opera, sported two or three carriages conspicuous for gaudiness and bad taste, and exhibited herself in costumes so remarkable for extravagance that she attracted all eyes wherever she appeared. A French *femme de chambre* was now added to her establishment, and a *dame de compagnie* engaged to appear with her in public, and to amuse her leisure hours. A lapdog, that indispensable appendage for women who have no mental resources, and who are compelled to bestow their tediousness on some victim or other, was purchased; and a collar enriched with diamonds, from which was suspended a heart set with the same costly stones, adorned this canine favourite. Mrs. Maclaurin exhibited herself in the streets and parks every day in her gaudy equipage, her *dame de compagnie* seated opposite to her with the dog on her lap, attracting the gaze of the crowd who mocked her, while she believed herself the object of general admiration, "the cynosure of curious eyes."

After having exhibited herself for two or three years in the metropolis, and in various watering-places, without having achieved any lordly conquest, she determined on seeking another theatre on which to enact the *rôle* of a rich widow in search of a title, and decided on going to Rome to pass the winter. Having dismissed the seventh *dame de compagnie*, who had within three years filled that office in her establishment, Mrs. Bernard was recommended to her as a successor, and set out with her for Italy. Long before half the route was completed, this luckless woman discovered with dismay that her new situation was quite as insupportable as any of her former ones. To an ignorance which rendered her incapable of appreciating the attainments of others, Mrs. Maclaurin joined a violence of temper, and an impatience under even the most puerile trials, which wholly precluded the possibility of peace to those who were domesticated with her. The least difference of opinion, although implied only by silence, was warmly resented, and severely punished by bursts of angry abuse, that would not have shamed the vituperative powers of the most accomplished professors of that

art in the famed purlieus of Billingsgate. A bed less comfortable than the one to which she had been accustomed to at home, or a repast less luxurious, produced the worst effect on her temper; and, unable, from her ignorance of their language, to express her rage to the astonished courier who attended her, or to the innkeepers at whose houses she stopped, the unfortunate Mrs. Bernard was commanded to interpret the abuse lavished on them by her imperious protectress, that lady narrowly watching the countenances of those lectured, in order to judge of the effect produced on them by her displeasure. If she found that their looks did not denote the extent of dismay which she calculated her anger ought to excite, she immediately concluded that Mrs. Bernard had not faithfully interpreted her words, and she consequently lavished on the defenceless head of that poor woman every epithet of reproach which her imagination, fertile in abuse, could invent, and her tongue, habituated to low language, give utterance. The indispositions, originating in repletion—and they were neither few nor far between—which assailed Mrs. Maclaurin, increased the acerbity of this coarse-minded and grossly selfish woman, who, having formed the most erroneous notions of France and Italy, became half frantic when she found how little the reality corresponded with her preconceived ideas. "Why didn't you tell me that there wasn't a decent inn on the whole route?" would she exclaim, while looking daggers at her unfortunate *dame de compagnie*. "If I had known that there wasn't a good four-post bed with chintz curtains to be found at every sleeping-place, and a rich soup, turbot with lobster sauce, or cod fish with oysters, and fat roast beef or mutton, I'd never have been such a fool as to come to France or Italy. And then their abominable sour light wines, for all the world like vinegar mixed with our claret and water, is enough to injure the best health." If Mrs. Bernard attempted to explain that, never previously having been in France or Italy, she was not aware of the difference between the inns in these countries and in England, she was instantly stopped by a "Don't tell me such nonsense! It's no excuse, for it was your business to have found out all about the inns, and to have warned me against exposing my health by venturing into such places."

The fact was, Mrs. Maclaurin, like all *parvenus*, unaccustomed in her youth even to common comforts, had, since her accession to wealth, and, above all, since the death of her husband had released her from all constraint, become a regular *gourmande*. Her dinner

was a weighty consideration with her, her breakfast and luncheon scarcely less important, and when disappointed in the degree of expected excellence of any of these repasts, her temper became insupportable, and Mrs. Bernard was the victim to its ungovernable fury. Prosperity had, as is often the case with persons naturally of an unamiable nature, drawn forth all the bad qualities of Mrs. Maclaurin. Wholly bent on gratifying her own selfish tastes, she was utterly regardless of the feelings of others, and thought that those around her were only created to minister to her comforts and pleasures.

Such was the woman to whom the sordid views of Lord Alexander Beaulieu were directed; and neither the rumours of her low origin, vulgar habits, nor disagreeable appearance, could deter him from seeking to win the golden prize, for wealth, in his eyes, as in those of many of his class, was the end and aim of all his aspirations, and to acquire which he was willing to take the odious incumbrance attached to it.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Oh! blessed day, when first young virgin lips
Confess affection, while the blushing cheek
Wears Modesty's own hue, and downcast eyes
Would fain conceal the love that beams in them;
And the small hand that, in the lover's grasp,
Trembles like timid bird when first 'tis caught
By some young truant, yet resigns itself
Unto its captor! O, what dulcet words
Are those low murmured, and but half distinct
Replies, that yield assent to fond demands!

We left Strathern and the fair object of his affection in all the delight consequent on a perfect *éclaircissement* of the state of their mutual feelings. There is, perhaps, no epoch in the lives of lovers so bright and unalloyed as that in which, after all the doubts and fears ever attendant on true passion are removed, they have unburthened their hearts to each other, and a sweet and tender confidence has replaced the harassing anxiety previously entertained. Each, now sure of the love of the other, beholds only happiness in

the present, and rapture in the future; and the knowledge of mutual affection has not yet degenerated into the positive certainty which so often gives a lover more the air of a husband of a year old, than of one who counts the moments until he can lead the mistress of his heart to the hymeneal altar.

Every object now assumed a different aspect to the eyes of Strathern and the fair Louisa, beheld through the bright medium of mutual love: and happy themselves, they were disposed to render all around them so. The next day Strathern sought a private interview with Mrs. Sydney, and revealed to her his passion for her lovely daughter, and the permission she had accorded him to address himself to her mother on the subject. The fond and anxious parent listened with satisfaction to the statement, for among all the suitors who had sought to win her daughter's heart Strathern was the one she preferred.

When he had unbosomed himself to her, she left him, and proceeded to Louisa's chamber, who, on seeing her enter, and anticipating all that had occurred, rose, and throwing herself into her mother's arms, hid her blushing face on the maternal breast that had so often pillowed her head in infancy, and wept tears free from sorrow, tears that fell on her fair cheeks like dewdrops on flowers, only making them more attractive than before. Mrs. Sydney led her daughter to the room where she had left Strathern, and joining their hands and pronouncing a mother's benediction on both, she was pressed in their arms, and assured by Strathern that, instead of losing a daughter by the proposed union, she would find that she had gained a son, whose study it would henceforth be to prove his gratitude for the treasure she had consented to accord him. A total change seemed to have been operated in Louisa Sydney. The coldness and reserve which had formerly thrown a shade over her had now wholly disappeared, and, like some rare and precious exotic, whose petals, long denied the cheering influence of sunshine, had closed, and who now, basking in its bright rays, opened its heart again to the genial warmth, she assumed a new beauty, and fascinated her lover more than ever, as he marked the transformation effected in her by the affection he had inspired in her youthful and guileless heart. Every day, every hour, was now fraught with happiness to the lovers. Constantly together, they parted at night with a regret as if the separation was to be a long one, and eagerly longed for the morning's meeting, to resume those confidential conversations which endeared, while revealing, the feelings of each to

the other. How many things had they to say which, though they might appear puerile to indifferent persons, were full of interest to them! How often was their first interview referred to, and how often was detailed the impression each had formed relative to the other!

"I thought you so proud, and imagined that you felt certain of making conquests," would Louisa say, while she suffered her little white hand to rest in that of Strathern, "that I determined not to like you, however agreeable you might be."

And the little white hand was pressed to his lips, and he whispered, "You were so cold, so haughty! How could you be so cruel, so stern, Louisa? You must have seen from the first how much I admired—loved you; and yet not one look or smile would you accord me for weeks."

And Mrs. Sydney would smile as she witnessed their happiness. But hers was a melancholy smile, for she remembered when a similar felicity was her own, when one as young and fond as Strathern wooed and won her youthful affection, and with whom, having enjoyed a few years of as much felicity as was ever granted to any of Earth's daughters, she had the misery to see snatched from her by ruthless death. She thought how *he*, who had so long filled an untimely grave, would, had life been spared him, have shared her satisfaction at beholding his daughter chosen by a man in every way so deserving of her hand, and how their own happiness would have been increased by witnessing the reflection of it in their children's. How frequently are sad and tender recollections, that sometimes slumber, but never die, awakened by passing events! "How would the departed one have felt on such an occurrence?" is a question which the bereaved heart often asks of itself; and, although new trials and sorrows make one feel thankful that the beloved dead have been spared them, aught that gives pleasure reminds us that those who would have shared it have fled from earth, and we sigh while wondering how, after such bereavements, we can stil feel pleasure. Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of Mrs. Sydney, as she listened to the betrothed lovers drawing fair plans for the future, that future which Heaven in mercy has veiled from our sight. And she, too, had counted on futurity; and one now sleeping in the tomb had sketched as bright pictures of felicity as Strathern was now drawing, and she had relied on their fulfilment as implicitly as her daughter now did; yet in a few brief years how had those fair hopes been dashed to the earth, and her

life embittered by the loss of him on whom all her happiness was based! These sad reflections Mrs. Sydney confined to her own breast, unwilling to cloud even for a moment the sunshine in which Louisa now basked, but ardently did she pray to the Almighty that the destiny of her child might prove a more fortunate one than her own, and that she might be saved that heaviest of all afflictions to a loving heart, the outliving the object of its most tender affection.

Strathern pressed for an early period for the ratification of his happiness; but Louisa refused to abridge the term originally named, being that of her reaching her eighteenth year, which wanted six months to its completion. At that period, Mrs. Sydney and her daughter were to return to England, where the marriage was to be solemnized, and to this arrangement the impatient lover, however reluctant, was compelled to yield an assent. And now, as an accepted suitor, Strathern was privileged to be in constant attendance on Mrs. and Miss Sydney, each day rendering his society more agreeable to them, as his noble and endearing qualities were revealed, and making him more anxious to call the lovely Louisa his. Together they visited the studios, and inspected the progress of the works executing for Strathern House; and again and again they loitered among the interesting ruins with which Rome abounds, or in the churches so rich in objects of art, and so fraught with interest to reflecting minds.

A true passion, however successful, always engenders a certain pensiveness in the hearts of those who feel it; but this sentiment is not without its own peculiar charms, and both Strathern and Louisa Sydney were fully conscious of its soothing influence. Often would a silence, more eloquent than words, betray the tender sympathy that linked their fond hearts together, when a pressure of the hand, or a glance in which the soul shone forth, supplied the place of speech. "Before I knew you, dearest," would Strathern say, "the sight of these ruins awakened only reflections on the mutability of human greatness, and the nothingness of grandeur and power. But now they remind me of the brevity of life; and, for the first time, the remembrance has become painful, because it forces on me the consciousness of how frail is the tenure of happiness, how uncertain its duration. When love, such as I feel for you, takes possession of the heart, the desire for immortality enters with it. To contemplate the possibility of existence without you appals me, and yet to how many dangers is life daily exposed! I think of this when I behold the wrecks of bygone ages around

us, and I can no longer philosophize on them as once I could."

"Philosophy, dearest, offers but little consolation for such *triste* reflections. Let us seek comfort where only it can be found, in the blessed hope permitted us that, though happiness on earth is fugitive, and at best of brief duration, in another world we may together enjoy that immortality which love vainly thirsts for here. Who that really, truly loves, can help turning his thoughts to that purer, brighter sphere, where no dread intrudes, where no partings are?" would Louisa reply; and, as Strathern gazed on her fair and open brow and mildly beaming eyes, he acknowledged that Heaven manifests few greater favours towards erring men, than when it vouchsafes them a creature like her before him, to lead them to think of and prepare for that world to which every day, every hour, brings them nearer. He looked on Louisa as an angel sent to conduct him through the thorny path of life to that heaven to which she seemed to belong, and a sentiment of reverence was mingled with the deep love he entertained for her.

One evening, when the weather was unusually mild for the season, Mrs. Sydney proposed that they should visit the Coliseum by moonlight. This was a pleasure that her daughter had long desired, but which the careful mother denied, lest the night-air might visit too roughly that cherished being on whose existence her own might be truly said to depend. An Indian shawl was folded around her graceful form, and Strathern busied himself in arranging it, so as to exclude the air. Mrs. Sydney's eyes glistened as she noted his watchful care of their mutual treasure, and Louisa smiled while saying, "You will spoil me, indeed you will, by making as great a fuss about me as dear mamma does."

Nor was Strathern exclusively devoted to his betrothed. Her mother was tenderly cared for, and Louisa never felt so convinced of his attachment and so grateful for it as when these gratifying proofs of his affection and respect for her parent were evinced by him.

Never was there a more propitious night for seeing the Coliseum than the one selected by Mrs. Sydney. The moon rose with peculiar splendour in a sky blue and clear as sapphire, and shed her silvery light over portions of the noble edifice, leaving other parts in deep shadow. In the arena, where once the gladiators mingled their blood with that of the ferocious animals to whom they were opposed, and the vast building echoed back the shouts of the brutal multitude, excited by the sight of the fierce combat, now rose the

simple altars dedicated to the Deity, and the voice of the white-robed priest offering up prayers alone was heard mid the stillness of night. The scene was an impressive one, and the feelings of the three individuals who now slowly and silently paced the spot were in harmony with it. But not long were they suffered to enjoy the reflections such a view was so well calculated to awaken. Loud laughter and the sounds of English voices painfully broke in upon their meditations, and, before they had time to retreat, and so avoid, as they wished to do, a rencontre with the persons whose rude mirth denoted such an uncongeniality with their own feelings, the following dialogue became audible to their ears :—

"I wish I had brought my air-gun, that I might have had a few shots at the owls, which I am sure must abound in such an old rookery as this."

"Oh, heavens, Fitzwarren! what an idea! How anti-poetic!"

"Why, what is one to do here, I should like to know? It would be all very well if there was any fun going on—a sparring-match, a bull-fight, ay, or even a cock-fight; but to go stumbling over loose stones, with nothing but those ruined walls to look on, and nothing but the nasal twang of the priest mumbling his prayers over in a language one does not understand, is to me a most unaccountable fancy."

"But every one makes a point to visit the Coliseum by moonlight once, at least, before leaving Rome," observed Lady Olivia.

"But what for?" rejoined Lord Fitzwarren, "unless it be to catch a cold in such a damp place."

"Read what Lord Byron says of the Coliseum, in the third Canto of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,'" said the lady, "and then you will understand why people love to come here by moonlight."

"So I am to read a poem, a thing I never do when I can help it, in order to know why a pack of moon-struck fools come here of a damp night, to go home coughing, wheezing, and sneezing with colds, that may make them wish they had stayed within doors. It was all very well for Byron to write verses on such subjets—he was lame, poor devil, and consequently could not amuse himself with field-sports, as every manly fellow ought to do; and, besides, he got, I have heard, plenty of money for his scribbling; but for rational people to come here is another affair."

"Think of five thousand wild beasts having been killed in the arena on the day when it was first opened," said Lady Olivia, with an erudite air.

"And good sport it must have been, too," remarked Lord Fitzwarren. "The Coliseum might *then* have been worth coming to see."

"You of course know that this building was erected by Flavius Vespasian, and is supposed to stand where once were the fish-ponds of Nero."

"By Jove, I know nothing about the matter!"

"It is supposed to have derived its name from a colossal statue of Nero in the character of Apollo, which was placed here by Titus Vespasian," said Lady Olivia pompously.

"Why hang me if little Livy does not bid fair to be as great a historian as her namesake; but how or where she has picked up all her knowledge surprises me."

"Where you may acquire it in a few minutes, if you wish," said Lady Sophia, spitefully—"in the travels of Mariana Starke, which I saw her consulting to-day, when it was settled that we were to come here; and she has given you the fruit of her study, verbatim from the book."

"Better know something of the places one is to see, than be, like you, totally ignorant of them," replied Lady Olivia, her cheek becoming red with anger, as she glanced fiercely at her sister.

"Yes, perhaps it is better," answered Lady Sophia; "but it is not quite fair to give the exact words of the guide-book with an air of learning, as if you were a regular scholar."

And now the vicinity of Strathern and his party became revealed to Lord Fitzwarren and the ladies who accompanied him, and he instantly exclaimed: "What! you here, old boy; and you, ladies? Well, I'm glad to find I'm not the only greenhorn. Now confess the truth, Strathern, is it not a regular bore to come cold-catching here? And you, ladies, can you discover anything now that might not be better seen in broad daylight?"

"Fitzwarren is so delightfully original!" lisped Lady Olivia.

"And so very matter of fact!" added Lady Sophia, sarcastically.

"I must confess I am quite of Lord Fitzwarren's opinion," observed Lady Wellerby, "for I always find the bad effects of the damp night-air, and infinitely prefer seeing ruins by day. Lord Wellerby warned me of the consequences of coming here; he is always so careful, so *prévoyant* for those dear to him! Ah, Mrs

Sydney! there is nothing like a husband for taking care of one—is there?"

Lady Wellerby had discovered that every allusion to affectionate husbands occasioned a pang to Mrs. Sydney, which was betrayed by her cheek becoming paler than usual, and by an involuntary sigh; and, since this discovery, she omitted no opportunity of referring to her own happiness in the possession of a tender partner, a blessing of which that lady was deprived.

"Yes, the old governor is devilish careful, I must confess," said Lord Fitzwarren, "and for a good reason, too. Don't you remember he said that if you brought on a return of your rheumatism, by exposing yourself to the night-air, he would have a doctor and a long apothecary's bill to pay? Yes, the old governor knows what he is about, so don't fancy, my lady, that it is anything but economy that makes him trouble himself about your health."

Lady Wellerby bit her lip, and looked annoyed, and her future son-in-law laughed aloud at her evident discomfiture and his own sagacity. Mrs. Sydney and her daughter could scarcely forbear smiling, as they noticed the disdainful air assumed by Lady Olivia towards the latter, and her efforts to draw off Lord Fitzwarren's attention from his former flame, while he, as natural as his bride elect was affected, stared at Louisa with undisguised admiration, and remarked aloud that he thought Miss Sydney's face looked by moonlight like the beautiful one of the statue he had seen at Gibson's the day before.

"Hang me, if she doesn't grow handsomer every day!" said he *naïvely* to Lady Olivia, as they walked away from the Coliseum. "That fellow, Strathern, is a deuced lucky dog to have won the heart of such a lovely girl:" and a deep-drawn sigh attested that Lord Fitzwarren felt what he uttered.

How did Lady Olivia long to express her difference of opinion with her future *caro sposo* on this point, for the undisguised admiration he evinced for Louisa Sydney irritated and piqued her vanity! but her prudence prevailed over her vanity, and she consoled herself for not openly dissenting from his sentiments on this occasion, with the determination that, when once the indissoluble knot of wedlock was tied, she would no longer listen in silence to the praises of other women from her lord, and, above all, to those of a girl whom she detested. Lady Sophia, who well knew her sister's character, had observed the mortification inflicted on her

by Lord Fitzwarren's admiration of Miss Sydney, and, desirous of repaying some of the many slights and annoyances that Lady Olivia had made her feel ever since he had become her affianced husband, she now joined most warmly in his commendations of Louisa, and assented to his remarks on the good fortune of Strathern in having won such a bride.

"Yes, he will be the envy of all his acquaintance," said she, "for who can be compared to Miss Sydney? Every woman looks plain near her, and so I thought when I saw her a few minutes ago with the moonlight falling on her beautiful face;" and the speaker glanced spitefully at her sister.

"Little Sophia is right," observed Lord Fitzwarren; "she *does* eclipse every other girl, and Strathern is a deuced lucky dog."

Lady Wellerby looked alarmed, and then made a sign to Lady Sophia to discontinue the subject; but that young person, gratified by witnessing the pain she occasioned to her sister, was by no means disposed to abridge her own satisfaction; and so, affecting not to see her surly mother's telegraphic signals, she continued—"No one has refused so many suitors as Miss Sydney. If rumour speaks truth, she has rejected every bachelor in Rome."

Lord Fitzwarren felt his face grow red, and Lady Olivia looked daggers at her malicious sister.

"Do you believe that she refused so many?" asked Lady Sophia.

"I know nothing about the matter," answered Lord Fitzwarren; "I only know that she did not refuse *me*, and for the best of all reasons—that I did not ask her."

Lady Olivia's brow cleared at this avowal, and she smiled graciously on her future husband.

"I hope, Sophia, you are now convinced that Lord Fitzwarren was not the rejected suitor of Miss Sydney?" said she, disdainfully.

Lady Sophia shook her head incredulously.

"I never popped the question to any girl except to you, Livy—and, hang me, if I can tell why I did so then!"

"A very flattering speech, I must say," observed Lady Sophia, while her sister bit her lip, and turned red with anger.

"Don't be vexed, Livy—what does it matter now? I *have* proposed—all is arranged, and I dare say we shall get on very well together, for you won't attempt to interfere with my mode of going

on, which all the women in the world would not make me change, and I am in the main a devilish good-natured fellow when I have every thing my own way, which I am always determined to have; so we shall be as happy as our neighbours, I dare say," and he shook Lady Olivia's hand kindly.

"I trust that no daughter of mine will ever shame the example and instruction which I have afforded her," said Lady Wellerby, drawing up her head proudly. "Lord Wellerby, after a union of many years, renders me the justice to affirm that to me he owes all his happiness."

"He does, does he? Well, the old governor must know best; but, hang me, if I think that the happiness of any man can depend wholly on a woman! It's a devilish good thing, I grant, to have a sprightly, good-tempered wife, who is always glad to see one's friends, and to make one's house agreeable; but, if a wife happens to be cross-grained and ill-natured, as some women turn out, why, one can eat a good dinner, drink prime wine, and keep up a jolly night with one's friends in spite of her; and, if she shows temper, keep never minding her, and she'll tire of it. If a wife was a perfect angel, she could not make the happiness of such fellows as me. I must have capital hunters, clever hacks, fine hounds, good huntsman and whipper-in, lively fellows to ride with me; a first-rate cook, choice old wines, large manors, with famous preserves, the best guns, well-bred and well-broke-in dogs, and steady keepers, to make *me* happy. The best wife in the world *without* all these would not render me so; whereas, an indifferent one *with* them could not make me unhappy; and, if you knew half, ay, or three parts, of the fellows I live with in England as well as I do, you'd find that they are of the same way of thinking, though they would not be so open and honest in confessing it as I have been. No, they make women believe, before marriage, that all their felicity depends on them, and so perhaps they themselves fancy, when they first take a liking. But, when the sporting and hunting seasons set in, they become of a different way of thinking, and the poor woman who took for gospel all her husband swore, finds herself left alone at home the whole day, to amuse herself as best she can, and in the evening must be content to see her husband and his friends come late to her tea-table, and hear them talk over the sports of the day, half asleep, and yawning from the effects of the violent exercise they have taken."

"What a picture of the life of a sportsman's wife!" said Lady

Sophia, turning up her eyes; "who would not compassionate such a fate!"

"Some may pretend to despise it," observed Lady Olivia, "who would, in their hearts, be but too glad to have a chance of being the wife of a sportsman!" and she looked angrily at her sister.

"Don't disdain sportsmen, Sophy, for I am determined to find you a husband among my friends one of these days. So study horses, cut out better ones in paper, learn to ride boldly, and leave the rest to me."

"Pray do not trouble yourself on the subject," answered Lady Sophia. "I have no intention of wedding a Nimrod, I assure you, for I am of opinion that it is better to lead apes in a place not to be named to ears polite, than to be tied to a fool on earth."

"Then I am to conclude that you consider sportsmen fools," observed Lord Fitzwarren, angrily.

"Sophia is only jesting," said Lady Wellerby, fearful that her daughter would seriously offend her future son-in-law, and bestowing a stern frown on that young lady, who, previously to her seeking her pillow that night, received a severe lesson from her mother on the injudicious line of conduct she had adopted towards her sister and future brother-in-law.

"He really is so *bête*, that there is no standing his folly," observed Lady Sophia.

"But, as you are not to pass your life with him, why need you mind his eccentricity," rejoined the mamma. "You ought to be too glad to see your sister married off our hands, to find fault with him who takes her. People will say you are jealous of her good fortune if they see you showing your temper in this manner.

"*Me* jealous! and of what, pray, have I to be jealous?—that she marries a blockhead, who has not two ideas in his head, and who is incapable of thinking or feeling?"

"Nevertheless, you know very well, Sophia, and so do I also, that you would have been very glad had Lord Fitzwarren proposed for you instead of your sister, and that you would gladly have accepted him."

"No, *indeed* I would not!"

"Then, Sophia, you are a greater fool than I took you to be; and the pains you bestowed in endeavouring to please Lord

Fitzwarren before he proposed for Olivia is very unaccountable;" and so saying, Lady Wellerby quitted her daughter's room, leaving that young lady highly incensed at her mother's expostulation.

"Olivia is in high favour at present," thought Lady Sophia, "because she has caught that imbecile Fitzwarren. Had I secured him, all the adulation she now receives would have been mine, but a day may come when it will be my turn to be complimented and flattered—would that it were arrived!"

While thus soliloquizing, Lady Olivia entered with a *nonchalant* air, and having seated herself before a mirror, after a pause of some minutes, said, "I wish we were at Paris or in London, for to be a bride elect at Rome is little worth being pleased at. No Storr and Mortimer's—no Howell and James to send forth every day their delightful green baize bags, filled with *écrins*, whose dazzling contents flash so brightly as to make one forget the absence of sunshine in our nebulous metropolis. Oh! the pleasure of beholding morocco and velvet cases opened one after another for one's approbation—the obsequious clerk holding up each to catch the light, in order that their lustre may be seen to greater advantage! Now he descants on the delicate purity of oriental pearls, and insinuates their appropriateness for certain interesting occasions, reminding the bride and bridegroom elect that the Duke of A., Marquis of B., Earl of C., and Viscount D., presented their *fiancées* with *parures* of these chaste and becoming ornaments. When the pearls have been sufficiently admired, and probably purchased, an *écrin* with sapphires set in diamonds is opened. How learnedly does the wily exhibitor dwell on the deep, rich blue, and velvety appearance of these precious stones!—the unusual size, the freedom from light tints towards the edge, proving the depth of the gem, the brilliant whiteness of the diamonds set around each stone, and the exquisite taste of the mounting. If the bride elect is fair, she is told that sapphires can only be worn by ladies of the fairest complexion; but, if she happens to be a brunette, then their admirable effect on ladies with dark hair is cleverly commented on. Next come emeralds—how brightly green and refreshing to the eye, adding, by the contrast, additional lustre to the diamonds that encircle them! Who could resist emeralds set in diamonds? Not I, for one. The clerk takes advantage of my apparent admiration for this charming *parure*. He tells how a Russian imperial duke examined, praised, did all but buy it, and how a French *altesse* royal regretted that the recent acquisition of a vast *terre*, which

took all his spare thousands, prevented his purchasing it. The Duke of Auburnland, he is quite sure, will buy it for his duchess as soon as he comes to town. What lover could withstand a *parure* coveted by royal and noble dukes? The bowing clerk is asked the price. Answers, 'Very cheap—only ten thousand pounds.' The bridegroom expectant starts a little; evidently *he* does not consider it so very great a bargain, but he is reminded that such jewels become heirlooms in noble families, descending from father to son. The *fiancée* blushes, or, what does as well, affects to do so, and holds down her head, and the lover desires the emeralds to be put aside for his final decision. Another *écrin* is drawn forth and opened, and rubies, rich, red, and glowing, flash among the brilliants. No, there is nothing—positively nothing that can equal rubies, and so every one in the room exclaims. These are of the true tint, neither too dark nor too light. What depth of colour, yet the bright scarlet how vivid!

"'Yes, they *are* unique, my lady. Your ladyship is perfectly correct in pronouncing them to be perfect, and so becoming too. Our house has been many years collecting the stones. We thought we should never be able to match them, but we triumphed over every difficulty, and do not now regret the trouble, although we cannot hope ever to be fully repaid.'

"'What is the price?' asks the future bridegroom, with rather a husband of ten years sort of a face.

"'Your lordship will be surprised when I tell you our demand is so very moderate. Only eighteen thousand pounds.'

"O! that I were in London to enjoy these bridal *douceurs!*" exclaimed Lady Olivia, breaking off; "then would I feel all the advantages of making a splendid marriage; but here in Rome—with nothing in the shape of ornaments to buy but cameos which are *passés de mode*, mosaics, fit only for the vulgar, and Roman pearls that impose on no one but the foolish purchasers—all the pleasure and solid advantages of a bride elect are lost. Heigh ho!"

"I see you understand Fitzwarren's character sufficiently well, Olivia, to be aware that, when you return to Paris and London, a wife of three months, he will be little disposed to indulge in the extravagant follies committed by men for their chosen wives, *avant*, *pendant*, but not three months *après* marriage."

"What will then avail whether or not he is disposed to be generous to me? As his wife, I shall have unlimited credit, and I mean to take full advantage of this privilege, I can tell you. He may

storm when the bills are presented, but he *must* pay, and the things I covet are worth standing a little contest for."

"When a woman marries such an animal as Fitzwarren, she ought to deny herself nothing."

"Yet this same animal, Sophia, you tried every effort to entrap, and you are now dying of envy because I have won him. Do you think that I did not see through your petty malice at the Coliseum this evening!—your extravagant eulogies of Louisa Sydney and your sneers at Fitzwarren?"

"So no other woman is to be praised in your presence, forsooth, without your taking it as an affront! And as to your stupid lover, who can resist laughing at such a booby?"

"I do not wish to quarrel with you, Sophia, and can make allowance for the disappointment you feel, so I will not continue a conversation so little amusing. *Bon soir;*" and Lady Olivia retired, humming a song.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"And wilt thou stoop to such base means for gold?
Forego thine own esteem, the world's respect?—
Think'st thou 'twill silence scorn, or cover shame,
Or give thee happiness? Ah! no, weak man."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu, having taken up his abode in the hotel where Mrs. Maclaurin lodged, set about carrying his plans for forming an acquaintance with that lady into execution. Various schemes suggested themselves to his fertile brain; but, previously to adopting any, he went to *reconnaître le terrain*, that is, to study the *local* of the landing-place on which the rich widow's spacious suite of appartments, as well as his own small one, opened. While thus occupied, a servant ascended the stairs to answer the bell of Mrs. Maclaurin, and Lord Alexander had barely time to enter the ante-chamber of his own room without being seen, when the domestic having opened the door of his mistress's, her lapdog, unnoticed by him, ran into the passage. In a moment the thought of seizing the animal flashed through the mind of Lord Alexander, who was standing with his door half-ajar. He opened it still wider, and the dog, of its own accord, ran into his appartment. He

quickly closed the door, took up the little creature, and caressed it, glancing at its diamond-set collar, so characteristic of the vulgarity and ostentation of its mistress, but so demonstrative also of her wealth; and the little dog remained perfectly quiescent in his arms. He, after a few minutes, locked it up in his bed-chamber, the most remote room from those occupied by Mrs. Maclaurin, and then he stationed himself inside the door of the ante-room, leaving it ajar, that he might hear what was going on outside. Soon the cry of "Bijou!" "Bijou!" was echoed around. The bell of Mrs. Maclaurin's *salon* was loudly rang, servants were heard running in every direction, and the voice of Mrs. Bernard was audible, humbly entreating the servants to search everywhere for the dog, while that of Mrs. Maclaurin, loud, coarse, and menacing, half-drowned it as she uttered invectives on the carelessness and stupidity of each of her suite, but, above all, on Mrs. Bernard, for having allowed the dog to go out of her sight.

"*Ah! quel malheur!*" exclaimed the *femme de chambre*, who now joined the group. "De moost bootifool *lettle* dogue in de vorld. Vat peety madame not leave him vid me! I so lofe him I vould not never let him leave my eyes. And *de superbe collier* vid all de *diamants*. Oh! Mon Dieu! Some vone steal him for de *collier*, and kill him. Vat a peety Madame Bernard did not take care of de dear bootifool aneemal!"

"She is right, 'twas all your fault," said Mrs. Maclaurin. "Have I not often told you not to let the precious darling leave the room without a servant to guard it?"

"I was engaged on the letter you commanded me to write, madam."

"A fine excuse, truly! Could you not hold the dog on your knee while you were writing, or, at all events, keep your eye on him? What's the good of a companion, or a 'dam de company,' as the French call it, except to ring the bell or look after one's lapdog?"

"*Ah! madame, que je suis fâchée!* If madame do as I say, she never lose de dear leetle dogue."

"What's the use of telling me so now?" said Mrs. Maclaurin; "you only do it to vex me. Don't stand staring there, all of you, like stuck pigs, but run in every direction until you find my darling Bijou. I'd rather you were all in the bottom of the sea than have my dog lost—and the collar too, that cost me such a sum! No one was ever so bothered with servants as I am: always plaguing and tormenting me with your stupidity and negligence."

"Had we not better offer a reward to any one who will bring the dog to you, madam?" asked Mrs. Bernard, in the meekest tone of voice possible.

"Offer a reward, indeed! Why, you must be a downright fool. What but a very large sum would tempt any rogue who might find it to resign the valuable collar, which, if broken up, would sell for a considerable price?"

"A hint that shall not be lost if ever this same collar falls in my way," thought the *laquais de place*, who had acquired enough English to comprehend Mrs. Maclaurin's unwise observation, and whose cupidity had been excited by it.

All the servants had, in obedience to the commands of their imperious mistress, gone in different directions to search for Bijou, and Mrs. Bernard alone remained to bear the brunt of that vulgar woman's anger. Loud and coarse were the invectives which she uttered, while the affrighted *dame de compagnie* stood, pale and trembling before her, not daring to answer, or endeavour to stem the torrent of reproach which, now the floodgate of Mrs. Maclaurin's wrath was opened, poured on the defenceless head—"Indeed, madam..."

"Don't tell me any of your nonsense; it's of no use, I can assure you, for I am not to be wheedled out of my just anger. It was your place to keep a strict watch on my dog, and you pretend, forsooth, that you could not do this while writing a letter: as if with two eyes you could not see to write with one, and watch the dog with the other!"

This ignorance of the law of optics would have forced a smile from any one less timid and nervous than Mrs. Bernard, but it only made her feel how unavailing and hopeless any attempt to reason with such a woman as Mrs. Maclaurin must prove. Encouraged by her silence, that lady resumed her lecture.

"You are," exclaimed she, "the most provokingly stupid woman I ever had the misfortune to meet with, and are the plague and torment of my life. Send Justing (her mode of pronouncing Justine), for she has some sense, and may be able to tell me what had best be done."

"Yes, I'm a miserable woman, and that's the truth of it," said Mrs. Maclaurin, when her luckless *dame de compagnie* had left the room. "Everything goes wrong, and everybody seems to have joined to vex and bother me. I can get nothing that I like to eat or drink. A pack of nasty French messes are served to me every

day that it makes me sick to look at, and a weak, nasty, sour stuff, with out-of-the-way names, which they pass off for wine, and for which I am charged extravagant prices, makes me positively ill. Then I am taken to look at churches so like each other that, except St. Peter's, I don't know one from another, and old ruins, about which the lacky, as they call him, prates by the hour without my understanding one word he says. I don't know to amuse myself or pass away the time, although I go to see everything that is to be seen, and have four regular meals a-day. If it wasn't for the time I spend in eating, dressing, and scolding, I am sure I'd die of *annuy*, as Justing says. I wish I had not left England, for that's the only place, after all, for people like me who have plenty of money. I'd go back at once, only I'm afraid people would laugh at me, for every one pretends to like Rome, tho' I'm sure they don't in their hearts. Heigh ho! how tired I am of foreign parts; and now to lose Bijou, and the collar that cost me such a mint of money! I'd rather twice have lost the dog than the collar, which I bought just to show the proud duchesses and countesses in London that, while they had only gold or silver collars for their dogs, I could have a diamond one for mine. Yes, I quite cut them out, that I did, and I saw in the park how spiteful they used to look, though they pretended to laugh. Who'd ever believe, at Ballymacrash, that Molly Malowny had a lapdog with a diamond collar!"

Not a word of this soliloquy was lost on Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who, having left his door ajar, and ensconced himself behind it, could distinctly hear it, owing to the door of Mrs. Maclaurin's room not being closed. He could have smiled at this *exposé* of her innate vulgarity, had he not been more intent on the advantage it gave him as furnishing him a perfect insight to her character—an insight of which he fully determined to take advantage with as little delay as possible. Justine now attended her mistress, followed by the melancholy Mrs. Bernard, whose countenance denoted her dread of anticipated insult. "What is to be done, Justing?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin. "I might put up with the loss of Bijou, for, after all, I never cared much about dogs, and only had this one because I saw so many grand ladies in London had them; but to lose the diamond collar is what vexes me."

"*Oui, madame, je conçois;* dat is, I understand you do like de diamonds better dan de dogue. Vat you best do is to write one *affiche*—vat you call advertisement—and offer de revard to whoever brings you de collar vide de dogue."

"Or the collar without the dog," interrupted Mrs. Maclaurin.

"*Comme vous voudrez*, madame, that is, as you veel; but peoples veel laugh so vera moche ven dey see you lofe de collar more dan de dog; I do not advise you do dat."

"Write an advertisement immediately, Mrs. Bernard, and write just what I say. 'A lady of fashion having lost her lapdog, which had on a diamond collar, she will give a reward of twenty pounds to any one who will bring back the collar and the dog.' And now put 'The diamonds are not real ones, though they look as if they were.' That' a good hit, isn't it, Justing?"

"Madame is so vera clever—vera clever, indeed."

"Yes, Justing; I'm no fool, am I?"

"Foole, madame! you are de most clever lady I never seed."

"Have you written the advertisement?"

"Yes, madam, here it is."

"Ring the bell, and send the lackey with it to the newspapers, and let it also be cried by the bellman. Write another notice for the bellman, and begin, 'Stolen or strayed, lost or mislaid, a diamond collar, with a dog. *Nota bene*.—The diamonds are all false.'"

"I believe, madam, that there are no town-criers at Rome."

"And if dere vas, it vould not do to let de English milors and miladies tink your bootiful collar, vat is so moche admired by everybody, vas false: dat would make dem all tink you not so *riche* nor so *grande dame*."

"You are right, Justing, quite right. Why do you never give me such good advice as Justing does, Mrs. Bernard, I should like to know?"

"I am fearful of giving you offence, madam."

"Fearful of fiddlesticks! Don't tell me a pack of stuff and nonsense, when you know in your heart you drive me half out of my senses every day of my life by your stupidity and folly."

"*Pauvre chère dame;* nobydy ought to vex madame, it make her look very bad in de face, spoil her beauty, and prevent all de pretty caps, and *toques*, and turbans from becoming her. Madame is *charmante* ven she is not vex."

"Do you hear that, Mrs. Bernard? Justing is quite right; you make a perfect fright of me by putting me in such passions."

"I assure you, madam, that it gives me the greatest pain to disoblige you; and, when I am so unfortunate as to do so, it is quite unintentional."

"So you always say; but what's the difference to me, when I

am put in a passion, whether you intended it or not, I should like to know?"

"Madame has de *raison*, and say vat is right;" and the artful Justine looked reproachfully at poor Mrs. Bernard.

"If every one about me would think only of pleasing me, and guessing what I like to be said and done, I should never get into a passion," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, "should I, Justing?"

"No, madame, you vould not; and den you vould be so handsome, so vera handsome!"

"You may take that brown velvet dress of mine, Justing, that was made at Paris; I shan't wear it any more."

"*Merci, madame.* Madame is so goot, so *aimable* to her *pauvre* Justine!"

"If all those about me," and Mrs. Maclaurin looked sternly at Mrs. Bernard, "were as attentive and clever as you are, Justing, I should always be in good humour. It would be so easy for people to guess what I like. You always do, I must say, Justing."

*Madame est trop bonne*, and so I always tell all de oder *femmes de chambre*, in all de *auberges* vat ve come to. Miladi is de best in all de vorld, I say. So elegante, so handsome, so generous, and so *comme il faut*; and den all de oder *femmes de chambre sont si jalouses*; dat is, be so jealous—ven de see *de belles robes*, de elegante dresses Madame gives to me; and, I say, your *maîtresses* do not give you such fine clothes, your *maîtresses* not so riche as mine is, and dat vex dem ever so."

"You may take the blue velvet bonnet with the black lace, Justing. I don't think it becomes me so well as my other bonnets do."

"*Merci, madame. Comme madame est bonne!*"

"I wish, Mrs. Bernard, you would follow Justing's example, and dress as well as she does. She is always perfectly well dressed, while you are absolutely shabby. The dam di company of a lady like me should always be elegantly dressed to do credit to me."

"I wish I could afford to make a better appearance, madam, but my means are limited. I trust, however, that I am always scrupulously clean."

"You deserve no credit for that, for you well know I would not keep you if you were not."

Justine could not conceal her triumph at being a witness to the contemptuous treatment the innocent and unoffending object of her

dislike experienced at the hands of her mistress, and glanced with an ironical smile at Mrs. Bernard.

"If you are so poor as not to be able to buy yourself a bonnet and cloak fit to be seen in when you go out with me, I will advance you a quarter's wages; though it is a thing I do not much like doing, for it makes people think they are to be kept for a long time, and I have lost money when I suddenly discharged servants to whom I had advanced cash."

"If you will permit me, madam, I would rather not receive money in advance, for I really cannot afford purchasing a new bonnet and cloak, after having so recently bought both at Paris by your recommendation."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu had now heard enough to be perfectly *au fait* of the character of the woman to whose riches he aspired, and to be able to judge of her *dame de compagnie* and *femme de chambre*. The first, he clearly perceived, possessed not the least influence with Mrs. Maclaurin, consequently it would be wholly unnecessary for him to conciliate her; but the second he saw could perfectly manage her, and he determined to secure the good-will of the artful Justine. He now enveloped himself in a large cloak, beneath which he placed Bijou, having first taken the precaution of binding a silk handkerchief over her jaws to prevent her barking. He sallied forth into one of the least frequented streets, and, having remained long enough absent to give a colour to his scheme, he returned to the hotel, and sent his card by his servant, with a request for an audience with that lady.

"What a *real* lord?" exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin. "Read the name over again, Mrs. Bernard! Lord! how well it sounds—quite like Alexander the Great, that Curnel Fairfax used to be reading aloud about. Tell the servant his lordship's company will give me great pleasure. Ring the bell, quick, Mrs. Bernard—how you crawl! no, run and send Justine to my dressing-room. Well, now, how provoking that I should not have put on to-day my new crimson velvet gown with the lace I paid such a price for at Paris, instead of this purple velvet one, which I have worn two or three times. Oh, dear! how vexatious!"

Mrs Maclaurin ran off to her dressing-room, exclaiming, the moment she entered it, half breathless with emotion, "Give me, Justine, my diamond earrings and the small feron—what do ye call it?"

"Ferronnière, madame."

"Yes, I always forget the name. There, fasten it! Now put in my earrings, and give me my lace cap with the crimson dalys (dahlias) and point-lace collar. Oh, I forgot! give me my diamond chain and bracelets, for before a lord I should like to appear what you call *com il foe*. There, that will do, Justing. How do I look?"

"*Charmante*, madame—bootifool!"

Mrs. Maclaurin hurried back to her saloon, where she found Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who bowed respectfully as she entered.

"How do you do, my lord," said she; "I hope your lordship is quite well. Won't your lordship take a seat?"

"I have taken the liberty of calling on you, madam, to....."

"Not the laste liberty in life; sure, ain't I glad, and proud too, to have a visit from your lordship?"

"I should not have ventured to present myself, madam, had I not fortunately the power to restore you something precious which you have lately lost."

"The diamond collar—the diamond collar of my dog! Ah! then have you found it—has your lordship really found it?"

"Yes, madam, and the dog too."

"Oh, for the matter of that, dogs are not scarce! there's always plenty of them to be had; but diamonds are dear things, and, as your lordship truly said, something precious; and, though I have plenty of diamonds, and money enough to buy as many as I please, still it vexed me to have lost what cost me so much. I paid five hundred pounds ready money—I always make it a rule to pay ready money for every thing I buy—for that same collar; and I believe there is not a lady in England that ever paid half that sum for a dog-collar."

"I am happy, madam, to have the power of restoring it to you uninjured."

"And how, my lord, did your lordship find it?"

"Taking a walk in the Piazza de Navona, I saw a man running along with the dog in his arms. I instantly recognised the animal to be yours, and . . ."

"How did your lordship know it to be mine? I did not think we had ever met before."

"You, madam, probably never noticed me, but who that has once seen *you* could ever forget you?"

"Oh my lord, you flatter me!"

"No, madam, I would not on any account presume to do so. I only asserted the simple fact, that, once seen, Mrs. Maclaurin can

never be forgotten. I did not know your name when I was so fortunate as to render you this little service, and only learned it when I returned to this hotel, where I also lodge. I stopped the man, and told him he must deliver the dog to me. He said he had found it in the street, and would not surrender it without a reward. I was only too happy to pay him his demand, and I brought the dog here with me, intending to ascertain where you might be found, when, on inquiry, I discovered that you inhabited the same hotel as myself. Fearing that a lady of your delicacy and refinement might be too much agitated if I abruptly brought the dog into your presence, I took the precaution of leaving it in my room, and, with your permission, I will now go and bring him."

"Oh, my lord! how shall I ever thank you enough?"

"Pray don't mention it, madam."

"But you must let me repay the sum you gave the man."

"Pardon me, madam, you must allow me to decline accepting any remuneration. It was a mere *bagatelle*—fifty pounds—not worth mentioning:" and Lord Alexander Beaulieu withdrew, and immediately returned with Bijou.

The first thing Mrs. Maclaurin did was carefully to examine the collar, and great was her satisfaction when she found that it was uninjured. She then addressed a few words to the dog, and renewed her thanks to Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"I am here quite alone, my lord, only my dam di company, and my soot of servants with me; and I feel so solintary and dull, that I heartily wish myself back in England again. Rome is not the place I took it to be, by no means; I thought it was quite a gay place like Brighton, but only genteeler, from being so far off that common people could not afford to come to it, and that there would be master of the ceremony's balls, and concerts, and raffles at the circulating libraries, and all manner of other amusements going on; but, instead of that, I find no sort of diversion, and am as dull as ditch-water."

"If I might presume to hope that my visits would not be unacceptable, I need not say how much happiness it would give me to assist to enliven your solitude."

"Oh! my lord, how kind and condescending your lordship is! I am delighted to be acquainted with a nobleman so polite and genteel, and if your lordship will come and dine with me to-day, I shall be proud and happy to receive you."

"You are too good madam; and although I have an engagement

of long standing, I will disengage myself, and have the honour of waiting on you."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu took his leave, throwing as much *empressement* and *tendresse* into his looks and manner as he could, fully convinced that he had made a most favourable impression on Mrs. Maclaurin; and for once his vanity did not mislead him. A lord, and, above all, the first one with whom she had ever conversed, could not fail to become an object of the greatest interest to the vulgar-minded *parvenue*; but when he happened, as in the present instance, to be tolerably good looking, and to have an air and manner infinitely superior to that of the few men with whom Mrs. Maclaurin had been acquainted in England, it cannot be wondered at that he appeared nothing short of perfection in her eyes. She ran to the mirror, the moment he had left the room, to see if her looks were satisfactory, and after a few minutes' contemplation of the image it reflected, which seemed to afford her the most perfect gratification, she desired Mrs. Bernard to ring the bell, and command the best dinner that could be had.

"Tell them to have turtle, and venison, and every other delicacy of the season, and not to mind expense; and to have champagne put in ice."

"I fear, madam, these are dainties not to be procured at Rome."

"What! not be able to get turtle and venison? What a horrid country!"

She then went to her dressing-room, when, having rang for the attendance of Justine, she entered into a consultation with her, relative to her toilette.

"Did you ever know a lord, a real lord, Justine!" said she.

"*Oui, madame*, several."

"And don't you think they are quite different from other men? So elegant, and so genteel."

"I have known some lords who be vera polite, *très-bien élevé*."

"Oh, they are all elevated, you know."

"I do not mean dat, madame."

"Ah! I guess what you mean, Justine; you mean that they are sometimes a little elevated, that they drink too much wine. You have heard, I dare say, of the saying 'as drunk as a lord.'"

"No madame, I not believe dat de milors drink moche more dan oder mens."

"Well, it's no matter what you meant; but it is of great consequence that I should be elegantly dressed to-day, for I have engaged Lord Alexander Bowler to dinner. Oh! he's such a handsome man, and so polite! He found Bijou, and the collar is quite safe; and he gave fifty pounds to the man who stole it to give it up to him, all because he knew the dog was mine. Was not that good of him?"

"But who vas de person dat did present dis milor to you, madame?"

"Himself, to be sure."

"*Ma foi!* Dat vas *un peu trop sans cérémonie.*"

"What's that you say? You always forget I don't understand French."

"I said, madame, dat it vas too leetle ceremonie for milor to present himself to you vidout knoving you before, or asking some lady or gentleman to present him."

"Lords have no occasion for ceremony, Justing; they know it's an honour to be acquainted with them, so they go and visit who they like."

"*Quelle drôle de chose!*"

"Droll shows—he did not say any thing about them; but if there are any at Rome, I'll ask him to escort me to see them. I'll put on my diamond necklace, Justing—No, on second thought, I'll wear my pearls; for, as he saw my diamond earrings, chain, and head ornaments, just now 'twill be as well to let him see that I have other things. Oh! Justing, he's such a handsome man, and so genteel!"

"*Eh bien, madame.*"

"What's bang?"

"I not know de exact English. I begin to tink, madame, you lofe dis milor."

"Ah! Justing, if *he* loved me!"

"*Peut-être* he does, madame."

"I wish I was sure he did, and I should be happy. Only fancy having such a husband, Justing, and to be called 'my lady,' and 'your ladyship;' and to have a coronet on my carriage, and on the buttons of my servant's coats. Oh! what happiness it would be! And to have my lord giving me his arm wherever I went. Wouldn't I be a happy woman?

"*Ah! ça dépend, madame,....*"

"Do, Justing, speak English; you put me out of all patience when you say what I can't understand."

"Vell, madame, vat I say is, dat moche depends if di[illegible]nilor lofe you truly, and not because he hear you have moche money."

"Why you talk for all the world, Justing, as if I was an old woman, and not fit to be looked at. Why shouldn't Lord Alexander Bowler love me truly?"

And Mrs. Maclaurin's face grew red with anger. The artful femme de chambre saw that she had gone too far in her zeal to infuse doubts of the sincerity of Lord Alexander Beaulieu into the mind of her mistress, and, anxious to repair this *maladresse*, she immediately had recourse to flattery.

"Dere is not no reason vy milor should not lofe madame *à la folie*, nor vy all men should not do de same, for madame is bootifool enough to *faire les grandes passions*—dat is, to make all de men in de vorld lofe her, but I hear of so many milors who spend de large fortunes, and den vant to marry de *riches veuves* dat dey may have more money to spend."

"It is very wrong, Justing, for people to say such things of the harystockcracy."

"I not know dat madame was so great an aristocrat."

"I wish I did belong to the harystockcracy; but perhaps I may, one day or other, Justing." And Mrs. Maclaurin drew herself up with as dignified an air as she could assume.

"Madame would *certainement* do honour to the *pairie*—dat is, to de pireage, I most say," observed Justine; and her mistress looked at herself in the mirror, and smiled complacently.

"Aha! madame, I see how it is, dis milor have touched your heart, or, vat is more likely, his title has touched it;" said the wily femme de chambre to herself, when left alone to her own reflections. "*Voyons*, would it be better for me dat she marry or not? If dis milor is generous, *comme il faut* and *aimable*, it would perhaps be best dat she do marry him; but if, *au contraire*, he is *ladre*, *méchant*, *et mal élevé*, it would be vera bad for me. I sall soon see. If he has one *valet de chambre*, I will make *connaissance avec lui*, and learn all about his mastere. Ve *femmes de chambre* know vat ve are about, and can soon find out every ting ve vant to know. *Quelle femme vulgaire est ma maîtresse!* How she was pleased at a visit from a milor! She seem as though she never spoke to milor before. And she put on her diamonds in de morning, to receive von *visite*, *quelle horreur*, and vil vear a *parure* at dinner, vid only dis mylor and dat *bête*, Madame Bernard, fit for a *grande* reception. It is in vain I do tell her dat de ladies *de bon ton* never do vear de

grande *parures*, except *en grande toilette*, and dat for de petit *dîner* et soirées dey vear de *demi-toilette*, vid de robes *beaucoup plus simples*, de long sleeves, and not *décolletées*; but de *dames Anglaises* have de rage to be always too moche dressed and too leetle, as the Prince de Talleyrand did say, deir robes begin too late and end too soon. Oh! how I laugh ven de valet de chambre of de prince tell me dis; 'tis so true, for many of de *dames Anglaises* vear deir dress moche too low on de shoulders and bust, and moche too short in de petticoat. Vell, vell, I know dat if dis milor have de thought to marry my *maîtresse*, he had better *faire la cour* a leetle to me, for if he do not, I vill make madame refuse him. No, no, she sall only marry who I vish. But probablement he never tink of dis foolish vulgaire voman. *Nous verrons, nous verrons.*"

While Justine was indulging in her soliloquy, Mrs. Maclaurin was questioning Mrs. Bernard as to her opinion of Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "Did you ever see so handsome a man before?" demanded she.

"I did not much observe his lordship, madame."

"Just like you. Lords are not so very plenty that you should not have felt some curiosity to see one. I suppose you have known so many lords that you pay little attention to them. But do you mean to say you ever saw a finer nobleman that Lord Alexander Bowler?"

"I have seen some, madame, that struck me as being more noble-looking."

"That shows me you are no judge, for I, who ought, from my large fortune, to know something of lords, am sure that this one is the finest of them all, and those who think differently only prove their ignorance. I desire that you show his lordship proper respect at table to-day, for it is a great honour for you to dine with a nobleman of such high rank."

Mrs. Bernard was so accustomed to rudeness from Mrs. Maclaurin that it had now ceased to make the same painful impression on her as it had done when she first engaged with that lady; nevertheless, the dread of reproof operated so strongly on her that she feared to give her opinion on any subject, even when solicited to do so by Mrs. Maclaurin, and often by this timidity drew on herself the censure she wished to avoid. She now saw that Lord Alexander Beaulieu had made a deep impression in his visit of the morning, and looked forward with alarm to the dinner, during which she doubted not that the hostess would compromise herself still more.

## CHAPTER XV.

With riches come a multitude of wants,
Unknown till luxury usurped the place
Of temperance. And heaps of gold are spent
To furnish forth to sated appetites
The costly viands which no pleasure yield,
But which, if absent, would again be craved;
For custom renders necessary things
That first, as luxuries, enjoyment gave;
And wealth, that might from poverty's stern grasp
So many rescue, pampers gluttony.

Punctual as a lover, Lord Alexander Beaulieu entered the *salon* of Mrs. Maclaurin as the clock was striking seven. He found the apartment nearly as light as day from the profusion of wax-lights distributed through it, and the lady herself attired in scarlet velvet, full-trimmed with point-lace, and wearing splendid ornaments of pearls and diamonds. A bandeau of the same precious gems encircled her head, and, being somewhat too tight, gave her broad and freckled forehead the appearance of the knee of a Highlander protruding from a tight garter. Plain and ill-favoured as Mrs. Maclaurin naturally was, the splendour of her dress made her look still more ugly; and her carriage and demeanour were so strikingly vulgar, as to force on every beholder the conviction that nature never designed her to enact the part of a lady, or to wear the costly ornaments which looked so wholly out of their place on her person. The coarseness of her complexion, the badness of her shape, and cast of her countenance, resembling those peculiar to the Irish apple-women to be seen at the corners of certain streets in London, appeared to still greater disadvantage when contrasted with the extreme richness of her dress. Her arms and hands, large, ill-shaped, and red, betrayed the hard work to which they had frequently been accustomed, the traces of which not all the cosmetics to which Mrs. Maclaurin had recourse could remove. There is, perhaps, no portion of the person which betrays low birth so plainly as the hands and feet; and the legs and feet of a thoroughbred racer are not more dissimilar from those of a dray-horse, than are those members in a woman of gentle blood and in one of low birth. Never was Lord

Alexander Beaulieu more convinced of this fact than when he beheld the ill-shaped red arms and hands of his hostess, the wrists confined by diamond bracelets, and the fubsey, square-topped fingers glittering with valuable rings. Her neck, too, short and ill-coloured, was encircled by pearls, whose delicate whiteness contrasted most unpleasingly with it, and her coarse bust was revealed by a style of dress that proclaimed alike her want of modesty and good sense, for the least portion of either would have led to a concealment of that part of her person. Mrs. Maclaurin jumped rather than arose from her seat, so great was her desire to do honour to the reception of her aristocratic guest, the first she had ever received; and, in the abruptness of her movement, she knocked down her *tabouret*, and nearly fell over it. A portion of the lace-trimming of her dress got torn in her efforts to preserve herself from falling, and her whole person became crimsoned by the exertion.

"How glad I am to see your lordship again! It's very kind of you to come and take potluck with me. I'm quite grieved that I couldn't get turtle and venison for you, though I had the whole town searched for them: but this is a poor, mean place, where nothing good is to be found. I told the people here not to spare any expense, for I never spare money. You see how easy I took the tearing of this beautiful lace"—and she held up the torn trimming—"although it cost me twenty guineas a-yard. Pray be seated, my lord. Mrs. Bernard, what could ye be thinking of to let his lordship remain standing there, and never to place a chair for him?"

"I am shocked, madam, to give you so much trouble," said Lord Alexander, preventing Mrs. Bernard from placing a chair for him, and bowing politely to the poor *dame de compagnie*.

"Don't mind her, my lord: she's used to do every-thing for me; I only keep her for it."

Mrs. Bernard blushed to her very temples; and even Lord Alexander Beaulieu, albeit unused to feel much sympathy with the oppressed, experienced a sentiment of disgust at the rude and unfeeling conduct of the vulgar woman before him.

"Ring the bell, and order dinner to be served. Didn't I tell you to have it put on the table the moment his lordship came?"

Lord Alexander, with the good breeding peculiar to the better part of his order, advanced to the bell before Mrs. Bernard could reach it, and performed the operation she had been commanded to do.

"O! my lord, you really shock me; your lordship must not be doing her work. Sure I keep her to do all my little odd jobs, such as writing my letters, ringing the bell, placing my footstool, and thranslating my scoldings to them foreign servants, which last service she does very badly; for they no more seem to mind her than if she was whistling jigs to a milestone."

"The dinner is served, madam," said the courier in Italian.

"And time for it," observed Mrs. Maclaurin. "We have been waiting a full quarter of an hour for it; and didn't I give ordhers that it was to be sent up the very minute his lordship arrived?"

The man, who understood not a word of what she said, retired, and, throwing open the folding-doors, a dinner-table, that might have served to dine twelve persons instead of three, was disclosed in the adjoining room, which, like the *salon*, was brilliantly illuminated. Four soups were on the table, at the head of which the hostess, led by Lord Alexander Beaulieu, seated herself. "What will your lordship please to take? will you have Pat of Italy? I never can say the word Pat without thinking of my poor counthry. I am an Irish-woman, my lord, and in Ireland, though we have plenty of Pats, we have no soup called afther them."

Lord Alexander had much difficulty to keep from laughing, and he observed that Mrs. Bernard looked ashamed and embarrassed.

"How bad the foreign soups are, my lord!" resumed the obtuse hostess. "Such weak, wishy-washy stuff! No rich gravy soup, or ox-tail, or giblet, or, above all, turtle. I like my soup strong, and with plenty of pepper, which warms the mouth and makes one relish the first glass of wine. Now, isn't this too bad? Look at the four dishes of fish. All messed up so that one can't tell one from the other. Never can I see here a fine cod's head and shoulders with plenty of oyster sauce, or a large turbot with lobster; no, nor even boiled soles with shrimp sauce, or salmon, or, in fact, anything that is good."

But though she found fault with the fish, Mrs. Maclaurin nevertheless partook heartily of each sort, using her knife to convey the morsels to her mouth, to the no small horror and disgust of her guest.

"I'll take a glass of wine with you, my lord, if your lordship has no objection?"

"Madam, you do me too much honour."

"What wine do you prefer? I like champagne best myself, for it puts me into spirits."

"Champagne, then, let it be."

The wine poured out, Mrs. Maclaurin took her glass, and holding it up, said, "Here's to our better acquaintance, my lord," and drank off the contents. "Why don't ye tell 'em to remove the fish, and bring the rest of the dinner? What's the good of knowing their lingo if you don't make use of your tongue?" and the uncouth hostess directed an angry glance at her alarmed *dame de compagnie*, to whom her speech had been addressed. When the next course was served—and it was sufficiently copious to have dined a party of twenty—Mrs. Maclaurin exclaimed, "Oh! look at the roast beef—was the like ever seen before? Not a sign of fat, and stuck full of bacon. They call this picking it—was there ever such fools? There's a dish, my lord, which they make a great fuss about. Will your lordship thry it? I am told it's very good, but I haven't the courage to eat it, though I know some people who buy it in London—I mean, wild bear." Lord Alexander looked astonished. "Yes," resumed the lady, "I know people who buy pieces of wild bear from the hair-dressers, who kill them for the bear's grease, which keeps the hair from falling off."

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Mrs. Bernard, with a deprecating countenance, "but the dish on the table to which you have referred is wild boar, and not bear's flesh."

"And why couldn't ye say so at first?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin, giving her a furious glance. "Your lordship eats nothing—positively nothing. Do have something else. I'm afraid there's not anything on the table that you like."

The lady herself, however, did ample justice to the viands set before her, eating of every dish, though finding fault with all, and importuning Lord Alexander Beaulieu to follow her example. Never had a dinner appeared to him so long and so *ennuyeux*; he was consequently impatient for its termination, and decided on making his escape as early as it was possible, consistent with politeness.

"Drink another glass of champagne, my lord, it will do your lordship good, for your lordship seems a cup too low; I often feel so myself, but I think it is all the fault of this muggy climate. No sharp breezes to whet the appetite and brace the nerves. Well, I shan't be sorry when I get back to old England again, and see a good substantial meal set before me."

The dinner removed, an expensive dessert replaced it, and Mrs. Maclaurin was for again loading the plate of her guest, heaping

fruit and conserves on it. "Now, do, my lord, pray do; 'twill do you good, indeed it will."

The hostess seemed to have no intention of retiring from the *salle à manger*, although the embarrassment of Mrs. Bernard, betrayed by anxious looks towards the door, and imploring ones to the lady, might have reminded any one less obtuse than Mrs. Maclaurin of the solecism in propriety she was committing by remaining so long there. She continued to partake of every fruit on the table, pronouncing each to be bad, and, to Lord Alexander Beaulieu's amazement and horror, washed them down by repeated bumpers of wine, which, strange to say, appeared to affect her so little as to induce the belief that her habits of intemperance were so confirmed as to render her in some degree proof against the effects of her unfeminine excess. Her spirits rose in proportion to her libations, and she volunteered a song, but even the charm of her voice, and it still retained its pristine sweetness, could not make her guest forget the disgust occasioned by her conduct. He literally felt a loathing, as he looked at her ugly face, flushed from the effects of the wine she had drank, and allowed that wealth, however great its extent, would be dearly bought by wedding such a woman. But though Lord Alexander Beaulieu acknowledged this fact to himself, he was by no means disposed to abandon his project of marrying Mrs. Maclaurin, should she give her consent to their union. "She is even more hideous and vulgar than I could have imagined," thought he, "and, in addition, has contracted the most disgusting of all habits in a woman, that of inebriation. Nevertheless, if I can wed her, the indulgence of this horrible habit, and I will take especial care not to check it, will abridge her days, and free me from such a burden, leaving me at liberty to enjoy her wealth." Such were the reflections of this heartless man of the world, as he sat at the board of the vulgar woman whose fortune he longed to appropriate; while she, dazzled by his title, and captivated by his manner, and that indescribable air and tone peculiar to persons of high breeding, thought only of doing him honour, and securing his acquaintance.

At length the folding doors of the *salle à manger* were thrown open by the upper servant of Mrs. Maclaurin, and that lady was led by Lord Alexander Beaulieu to the drawing-room, where a table, laden with coffee, tea, and cakes of every description was set out.

"Doesn't this remind your lordship of England?" exclaimed the

lady, pointing to a pile of hot muffins and crumpets, and to a large sally lunn. "Yes, this and my breakfast are the only comfortable meals I have, for they are thoroughly English, thanks to an excellent London pastrycook, who is established at Rome. Through him I am also enabled to have beef-steaks and mutton-chops, and bottled porter for my luncheon every day, which keeps me alive, for positively I should die if I had not something to keep me up, after the bad dinners I get—a pack of kickshaws enough to poison one. Do eat a hot muffin, or crumpet—you really must, for you ate nothing at dinner. Well, then, a slice of sally lunn—it is capital, I assure you, and the butter excellent. I got it from the dairy of a prince—I forget his name—who sells it instead of keeping it for his own use. Fancy a prince, a real prince, selling butter! Well, I'm sure none of our English princes would do such a thing; but, I forgot, we have no princes; our royal family are only dukes."

Lord Alexander, having witnessed the demolition of sundry muffins, crumpets, and slices of sally lunn, by Mrs. Maclaurin, and the emptying of several cups of tea, pleaded an indispensable engagement of long standing, and arose to depart.

"Sure you'll not go away so early," said the lady. "Stay a little longer, and let us have a comfortable chat by the fire."

Lord Alexander expressed great regret at the impossibility of his being able to remain, and so well enacted it that his hostess observed—

"If you can't stay now, what's to hinder your coming back to have a bit of supper with me? Merely some broiled chicken with mushrooms, and a few other light things. I always have a hot supper; it makes such a good finish to the day, and insures one a good night's rest, for going to bed on an empty stomach is sure to keep me awake."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu urged an engagement with some of his male friends, after the *soirée* he was going to should be over, as an excuse for not returning to supper.

"Can't you bring 'em here? I like a merry party, and, as I know no one in Rome, I'll be very glad to make some pleasant acquaintances. Yes, bring some of those young lords here, and I'll order a larger supper."

"They could not think of coming, madam, without being previously presented to you."

"Oh! don't let them stand on any ceremony. I hate ceremony, and so I tell Mrs. Bernard every day. Would you believe it, that,

when I proposed to send invitations to all the lords and ladies at Rome to come and dine with me, she persuaded me not to do so, saying, they would think it strange, and refuse to come. But I told her, how am I ever to make acquaintances if there is no beginning. They won't begin, so I must; and, as I have more money than any of them—ay, and perhaps than all of them put together—it's my place to invite them. Don't you think, my lord, I was right?"

"If I may be permitted to give an opinion, I should say that Mrs. Bernard's judgment was correct. It is not the usage in society, and persons of a certain rank are peculiarly careful not to violate etiquette, or to accept invitations from total strangers."

"But it's their own fault that I'm a stranger to them. Here I am, ready and willing to be acquainted with them; and what more can I do than wish to show them a little Irish hospitality?"

"As you have done me the honour of consulting me, I hope you will allow me to advise you not to make any overtures towards acquaintance with the English society here. A single lady, travelling in Italy without the protection of a husband, father, or brother, is placed in a delicate situation, and, unless well known in the fashionable world, or presented by some lady of distinction, she would find it difficult, if not impossible, to enter the circles here."

"It's not my fault that I am travelling without a husband. The one I had—and a very good-natured old gentleman he was—is dead and gone; and, though I have had some offers of marriage since, none of them shuited me; but, if I could meet with a gentleman or nobleman"— and here the speaker looked full in the face of Lord Alexander Beaulieu "who would not object to a rich wife, I'd soon make up my mind to change my condition, for, after all, it's but a solitary life to be always condemned to have no companion but Mrs. Bernard, who never says or does any thing to amuse or divart one."

There was no mistaking this hint, and it was not lost on him for whom it was meant, though the total want of womanly feeling which it indicated increased his bad opinion of the lady, to whom, having made his bow, he departed, heartily glad to have escaped her presence, but fully determined to pursue his addresses to her. "I'll soon change her present vulgar system of reckless extravagance," thought he, as he proceeded to a *soirée* at Lady Melsingham's, "and find better use for the money she so foolishly lavishes in her own selfish enjoyments."

Thus reasoned Lord Alexander Beaulieu, forgetful that, while he found fault with the selfishness of Mrs. Maclaurin, he was no less culpable of that sin himself, in his determination to curb her enjoyments, that he might more fully indulge his own. But so it often is, those are most ready to censure in others the very vices most prevalent in themselves, and to curtail, if in their power, the expenditure that contributes to the pleasures of the very persons to whom they owe all they possess.

When Lord Alexander Beaulieu found himself that night in the midst of that circle which he considered the *nec plus ultra* of fashion, and into which Mrs. Maclaurin so ardently longed to obtain an entrance, the world's dread laugh when his courtship to the vulgar *parvenue* should become known, presented itself to his mind, and he shrank under it, even in anticipation. "But gold—gold," thought he, "will console me for the ridicule such a *mésalliance* cannot fail to excite: and, after all, my marriage will be like other events, but a nine days' wonder, soon to be forgotten for some newer topic."

"Where have you been hiding yourself, Axy?" said Lord Fitzwarren. "Come, tell me where you dined to-day. I looked for you everywhere, because I wanted you to dine with me; but, hang me, if I could discover where you were. You are not a man to eat a bad dinner at your own expense, when you might get a good one at a friend's, are you, Axy?"

"I dined alone. Had a headache, and, by abstinence and temperance, two remedies not easily to be practised in your society, Fitz, I have got better."

"No, Axy, I won't believe a word of it. You have been about some mischief. I see it by your face, for you look as thoughtful as if you had lost some thousands on the Derby or Oaks."

"Or as if I were going to be married," added Lord Alexander.

"There's not much chance of that," said Lord Fitzwarren, piqued by the implied sarcasm; "younger brothers can't easily find wives now-a-days, unless they are content to wed city heiresses or rich dowagers."

"Better marry for money than be chosen for it," observed Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "Poor men are compelled to wed for fortune; but rich ones are caught by portionless girls, who care not for the men, but for their wealth."

Lord Fitzwarren felt the sneer, but, doubtful of his own power of repaying it in kind, he abstained from replying, and moved away.

"I am so glad to have met you," said Lady Wellerby, rising from a card-table where she had just won three rubbers, and anxious not to risk any portion of her winnings by continuing to play. "I wished to speak to you about your friend Lord Fitzwarren. I know you have considerable influence over him, and I want you to exercise it, in order to induce him not to persist in dining every day at his hotel, instead of coming to us. It looks so strange, so very unaccountable, that I fear it may give rise to ill-natured observations."

"In your place, Lady Wellerby, I would not interfere with his fancies. Let him dine where he likes, for Fitz is an obstinate fellow, and cannot bear being meddled with."

"But don't you think it is very strange that, being so desperately in love, and on the point of marriage with Lady Olivia, he should prefer dining away from her, nay, even remain so long at table after dinner, that he is not always fit for the society of ladies?"

"*Que voulez-vous?* Such are his habits, and he is not likely to change them."

"But surely you might advise him, might hint at the impropriety of his continuing to pursue the same course, now that he is about to be married, that he did before he had proposed and been accepted."

"And so quarrel with an old friend, which would be the inevitable consequence of such officiousness on my part. No, Lady Wellerby, I have had too much experience to force advice on my friends; so you must excuse my interfering on this occasion."

"I dare say you are right, quite right, Lord Alexander Beaulieu; and, after all, the bright eyes of Olivia will do more in bringing him to our wishes than any advice, and I will trust entirely to that."

And Lady Wellerby turned to speak to Mrs. Sydney, who, with her lovely daughter and Strathern, who seldom left her side for a moment, were seated near the spot. A feeling of bitter hatred and envy, similar to that which the serpent may have been supposed to have experienced, when contemplating the happiness of our first parents in Paradise, inflicted a severe pang on the breast of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he glanced on the happy countenances of the fair Louisa Sydney and the enamoured Strathern. "*He*," thought Lord Alexander, "has now a rich prize, uniting in herself, youth, beauty, good family, and a great portion, while I—I am

compelled to stoop to ugliness, vulgarity of the coarsest description, and connexions of which, judging from the horrid woman herself, I can scarcely form too repelling an idea. Yes, they may well smile. Life wears for them its brightest aspect. How I hate them both! *Her*, for rejecting my vows, and *him* for being preferred. Would that I could wreak some portion of the vengeance my breast prompts on their heads!—that I could disturb that happiness which they so ostentatiously display! But I will not despair of yet accomplishing this. Mine is not a nature to forgive slights, or to let opportunities of punishing them pass by unheeded. Yes, ye may smile now, but a day shall come when your smiles shall be turned to bitter pangs, and I—I will be the cause. Were ye told this at present, ye would be incredulous, and hold in derision my threats, so confident are ye of your mutual affection and constancy; but I, who better know the weakness of human nature, and yours in particular, who am aware of the ungovernable pride and quick sensibilities of you both,—*I* know the vulnerable points to assail, and in anticipation rejoice in the torture I doom you to endure. And yet I could have loved this fair creature; and her wealth, had she bestowed her hand on me, might have rendered me a good man. The temptations, instigated by poverty, that demon who prompts so much evil, would no longer have existed; and in the enjoyment of affluence, and blessed with such a wife, my nature would have changed. But she spurned me, yes, contemptuously spurned me, and I—fool, dolt, idiot as I was—I offered to her mother the vows that she had rejected, and met a similar refusal. The mother and daughter have doubtlessly compared notes on my disastrous proposals, and consequently I have probably been made the subject of their scornful mirth. I loathe them both for this, and my wounded pride cries aloud for vengeance when we meet, and that I shrink with shame from their glance. Strathern, too—he is made acquainted with my rejected suits, and joins in their ridicule of me; I see it in his altered mien, his averted eye. When were women known to conceal any triumph they may have achieved, or to have spared their mockery of any aspirant to their favour whom they may have repulsed? Perhaps the very smiles now playing on the lips of all three have the refrain in my rejection. There is wrath and hate—unquenchable and direful hate—in the thought; and should my vengeance slumber, the recollection of these smiles shall awaken it, and urge me to work the ruin of their happiness, when least they dream of the hand they have armed against them."

Who that beheld Lord Alexander Beaulieu while these reflections were passing in his mind could have believed that the mild, gentlemanly-looking man, with manners so bland and demeanour so distinguished, who made one of the fashionable crowd in the *soirée* at Lady Melsingham's, was, with the spirit of a fiend, contemplating the happiness of those who had never injured him, nay, who while he imagined them smiling in derision at him, bestowed not a thought on him, and were at the moment unconscious of his presence! Alas for poor human nature! such plotters against the peace of others are not rare in society, and many are those who, urged on by envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, do not hesitate to wound those who have never injured them.

Before Lord Alexander Beaulieu had left his pillow the next morning, a note, so perfumed with otto of rose as to make his head ache, was presented to him. Gilt cupids, with all the emblems of the sly archer, decorated the border, with the glaring vulgarity of which the contents of the note bore no similarity. It contained only the following lines:—"Mrs. Bernard is commanded by Mrs. Maclaurin to request the honour of Lord Alexander Beaulieu's company at dinner to-day, at seven o'clock."

"By my faith, this wild Irish woman is determined not to let our acquaintance cool," said he, turning with distaste from the perfumed billet. "There will be no occasion for me to take any trouble to win her hand—and, ye gods! what a hand!—for I venture to say that ere many days have elapsed she will demand mine. I wish she was not such an abominable bore; for it would be convenient enough to find a good dinner at my hotel, which would cost nothing, when I had no other engagement. If she were less outrageously vulgar, I might ask one or two men to dine with her, and so lighten the overpowering dulness that pervades her too substantial repasts; but she so exposes herself that I must keep her out of sight until the nuptial benediction shall give me the power to check her exuberance of manners and modify her into something less offensive than she is at present."

"The lady has sent for an answer, my lord," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu's valet, entering, and breaking the chain of his master's reflections.

"Say I am not up—not awake—any thing—but add that an answer shall be sent when I have made my toilette."

"What a monster, thus to torment me!" resumed Lord Alexander when the closing of the door assured him that his valet had

departed. "Positively, I hate her more and more, as I discover how pushing and impudent she is. I plainly see I shall have no peace until I have a legal right to govern this obstreperous woman—no, hang it, I won't so far degrade the sex as to call her woman—this odious animal. Were she only modest and quiet, I could find it in my heart, in spite of her ignorance and ugliness, to behave tolerably well to her; but I see she will soon wear out my small stock of patience, and when that is gone she will find I am not a man to be trifled with. I never knew how abominable any thing in petticoats could be, until I made the acquaintance of the delectable Mrs. Maclaurin. I can hardly, much as I want money, bring myself to think of such a creature being called Lady Alexander Beaulieu, Faugh! it sticks in my throat. I must not think of it."

## CHAPTER XVI.

"Shun selfishness, nor let it entrance find
Within thy breast, for 'tis a deadly foe
To noble impulses and gen'rous deeds,
Cank'ring the heart where it doth once take root,
And stealing it 'gainst pity's soft appeals.
It knows not love, or friendship—all engross'd
By its own narrow joys, or cares, it lives
Shut out from sympathy with human kind."

"Well, Livy, and so the old governor tells me that we must go to Naples to be spliced, as Protestants can't be married at Rome. What a deuced bore, isn't it? I thought the thing could be done here without any trouble or bother, instead of which we are to be dragged to Naples in the company of the old people. The very thought of it sets me yawning."

"We shall soon be released from their society," said the Lady Olivia, "and a great relief it will be, for papa is so surly, and mamma so full of fancies, and so fond of giving advice, that I long to be away from them."

"Then you, Livy, have as great a dislike to being advised as I have, it seems. I never could stand it. Even when a child, I used to fight the nursery governess for attempting to counsel me, and I often resented my poor mother's advice, though it was, I dare say, meant all for my good. But tell me, Livy, couldn't we manage to

put off our marriage until we return to England? There we could have all matters so much better arranged. Settlements drawn up, wedding finery bought, new carriages ordered, horses purchased, and my houses brushed up."

"Oh! I'm sure, Lord Fitzwarren, if *you* are not in a hurry, I am not," and Lady Olivia bridled and looked greatly offended.

"Come, Livy, don't be angry. I am very willing that we should be spliced to-morrow, for the matter of that, but I hate trouble and bother, and I foresee I shall have plenty of both, with the old ones."

"Can't you write home to your lawyer, to have the settlement drawn up and sent out here for our signatures?"

"You are right; so I can, and will, too, by this very post. I wonder I never thought of it before. You have a good head, Livy, I am glad to see. It will take from eighteen to twenty-one days for my letter to get to town—three weeks or a month for those plaguy lawyers to have the title-deeds examined and the settlement drawn—and eighteen days to bring them here; so that it will be nearly three months before we can be married. This is a bore, for I like to do every thing off-hand, without delay, just as I do out hunting, when I never look before I leap, lest I should funk, and become a timid rider. Rome gets terribly stale to me, Livy, and I have just been thinking that, to wile away the next three months, it would amuse one to run over Italy a little. I have seen nothing of it yet but Florence and this dull place, and I should like to go to Venice, on thence to Naples, and make a tour in Sicily, and so meet you at Naples by the time the settlements can arrive there. Don't you think this would be a good plan, Livy?"

Lady Olivia, though really indifferent to her future husband, whose society was even irksome to her, was nevertheless mortified and offended at this convincing proof of his indifference towards her. She felt that, if he had any attachment to her, he would not propose a separation of three months merely for his pleasure, and she resented this indifference on his part as warmly as if she herself were not conscious of an equal want of affection towards him. She had, however, acquired a sufficient knowledge of his character to be fully aware of the impolicy of betraying the anger she felt; and, though bursting with rage, she smoothed her brow, and said, that though a separation from him of three months would give her great pain, she would not put her own pleasure in competition with his, and should, therefore, not oppose his wishes. Never had Lady

Olivia previously achieved so great a conquest over her temper, and it soon met its own reward, for Lord Fitzwarren, gratified by her docility, declared that she was a deuced sensible girl not to wish to have him always tied to her apron-string, and that he liked her all the better for her readiness to meet his wishes.

"I'll be off to-morrow," said he, "for the sooner the better. I'm heartily tired of Rome, and shall be glad when I leave it."

"You will dine here, won't you?" and Lady Olivia put on her most winning smile.

"No, Livy, it's impossible. I cannot stand the old governor's dinners and wine. Both are execrable; and life is too short to spoil one's comfort by eating bad dinners, and drinking bad wine, when one can get better."

"But you will come early in the evening? Do, pray, dear Fitzwarren."

"As early as I can, Livy. I hate to gulp down my wine in a hurry, and I must smoke half-a-dozen cigars, my usual quantum; and then I have to change my dress, lest you should be annoyed by the odour of the smoke: so you see it will be late before I can get here."

Still Lady Olivia smiled as blandly as ever, nor even when her selfish and unloving future husband took his departure, urging the necessity of looking out for some fellow to partake his dinner, did she evince the slightest symptom of the angry emotions that were struggling in her breast. When, however, he had left the house, she could no longer control her feelings, and a passionate burst of tears revealed their bitterness.

"To be thus slighted by such a brute," said she, "after all the pains I have taken to win him, is too, too mortifying. How I hate him!" but, ere she could finish the sentence, and the expression of her countenance indicated that it breathed of future vengeance for present slights, the door was hastily opened, and Lord Fitzwarren entered.

"I forgot my handkerchief," said he, walking up to the chair where he had left it; and then observing, for the first time, the tears of Lady Olivia, which she vainly sought to check, he took her hand, and, with more gentleness than he usually evinced, asked what was the cause of her weeping.

"Tell me, Livy, what is the matter? I never saw you thus before. I can't bear to see a woman cry; it makes me feel quite out of my element. Come, Livy, tell me, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing," sobbed the lady a sudden thought flashing across her artful mind, of turning the tears or anger she could not check to goot account. "I have been wea—weak, and fool—foolish, at the thought of your leav—leaving me for so long a time, and was so overpowered that all my good resolutions of not giving way to my feelings vanished," and she wept anew. "Don't blame me, dear Fitzwarren, for indeed I could not help it!"

"Poor Livy! Don't cry—there's a dear, good girl!" and, softened by her emotion, which he received as a genuine proof of her affection, he never felt so well disposed towards his future wife as at that moment.

"You will think me so weak, so childish," and her sobs nearly impeded her utterance. "I would not weep before you, but, when I thought you were really gone, my tears would no longer be controlled."

"You have a warm and affectionate heart, Livy—that you have," and he put his arm around her waist and kissed her cheek. "And you are a good girl, Livy, no to have tried to argue me out of going. If you had, ten to one I should only have been more determined on it, for I am an obstinate fellow, and as difficult to be managed as my mare Fanny, who always would have her own way; but now that I see you are really grieved, and have shown no ill temper about it, I'll put off my tour for a week; so dry your eyes, Livy, and let me find you this evening as gay as ever when I come."

So saying, Lord Fitzwarren, having again pressed his lips on the brow of his lady-love, took his leave, well satisfied with her, and still more so with himself. "The poor girl is desperately fond of me, that's clear," thought he. "I didn't think she was so devilishly in love with me," and he pulled up the collar of his shirt, and threw himself to the utmost height of his stature. "Well, I must say it showed very good sense in her not to cry until I was gone. I'm glad though that I caught her in tears, poor soul! It makes me like her better than before—yes, much better. If that plaguy girl, Miss Sydney, had only loved me half so well as poor Livy does—if I could but have seen *her* shed tears at the thought of my absence, hang me if I shouldn't have been ready to give up every thing—ay, and do any thing on earth she liked! It's odd how that girl sticks in my mind! but I suppose it is because she is so confoundedly handsome, and above all, perhaps, because I know I can't have her. Devil take her, say I, with all my heart, for pre-

ferring that fellow Strathern to me! What could she see in him to make her accept him, when she was so cold and haughty to me! Well, Livy wouldn't, I'm sure—no, *she* is really devoted to me. Never saw a girl so much in love in all my life; I'm afraid she'll be plaguishly jealous—all loving wives are—and that would be a horrid bore! Poor Livy! I must really not make her unhappy; but what is a fellow to do who is rather good-looking, and rather admired by the women? 'Tisn't my fault if they will take a fancy to me, for I don't lay myself out to please them—never did, and never will—but, somehow or other, they will take a fancy to me."

Soon after Lord Fitzwarren had left Lady Olivia, her mother and sister, who were in the next room, entered; and Lady Wellerby, observing the traces of tears in her daughter's eyes, inquired the cause. "Have you had any quarrel with him, Olivia?" demanded she. "You know I cautioned you to avoid the least difference of opinion with him, for he is as obstinate as a mule, and will not bear the slightest contradiction."

"I should think that I am not quite such a fool as not to know how to manage him by this time," said the Lady Olivia, looking very sulky.

"But why have you been in tears? Something must have occurred to make you weep, for you are not prone to shed tears, and I am really alarmed for the consequences. It would be too bad if any thing should now occur to disturb a marriage so happily arranged, and to which we all look forward with such delight."

"If any thing could disturb it, it would be the bad dinners and wine here, which prevent Fitzwarren from dining with us, and so he is thrown among men who might talk him out of marrying."

"Bad dinners and wine here! why you really surprise me, Olivia. Your father does nothing but scold me from morning till night on the expensiveness of our table, and, no later than this very morning, insisted on my making a new arrangement with Lambertini, our host, to furnish our dinners on a more moderate scale and for less money."

"Well, I never heard any thing to equal the coolness of a lover telling the object of his affection that her father's dinners and wine are not good enough to induce him to come and partake them with her. Poor Olivia! what a prospect of misery is before you!"

"I don't require your pity, Sophia, and I beg you will reserve it."

"Pray don't quarrel, girls; but tell me, Olivia, the cause of your tears.

"Is it not enough to make any one cry to have a father so stingy that he will not, on an occasion like the present, allow proper dinners, when the want of them compels Lord Fitzwarren to dine away from me?"

"If he cared a straw for you, Olivia, he would prefer the worst dinner possible with you to the best when absent from you."

"Just like you, Sophia; always putting the most ill-natured construction on everything, and saying the most spiteful things."

"I only speak the truth. Ask any one, and he or she will tell you exactly what I have done."

"I did not think, Olivia," observed the lady-mother, "that you had allowed your feelings to be at all interested by Lord Fitzwarren. I fancied that you considered your marriage with him wholly as one *de convenance*."

"Nevertheless, it is not possible for me, mamma, to see myself ill-treated without my being wounded by it. When neither you or papa will put yourselves the least out of the way to please and conciliate my future husband, is it to be wondered at that, instead of showing me proper attention and respect, he never dines here, and is thrown among a set of brutes of men who encourage him to drink and smoke every evening? He now proposes to set off for Venice, thence to Naples and Sicily."

"Good gracious! you don't really mean this! No, no; we must guard against such a measure by every means in our power, for the probability is that, if he once got away, there would be an end to the marriage. I don't wonder you wept, my poor Olivia. You must really have been greatly alarmed by such a proposal coming from him."

"Does not this very proposal prove that he does not care a pin for Olivia?" observed Lady Sophia.

"Sophy, you will drive me mad, with your ill-nature;" and here a few more tears chased each other down the flushed cheeks of Lady Olivia.

"Hold your tongue, Sophy, and don't irritate your sister. Lay aside your jealousies and quarrels, and let us consult on what is best to be done to prevent this foolish man's getting out of our clutches."

"The first thing is, to get good dinners and wines, to induce

him to dine here instead of at his own hotel: and the second is, to make the sacrifice of letting him smoke here."

"Really, Olivia, I don't know how all this is to be managed. I'll try to make your father understand the necessity of a change in our dinners, but for the smoking, it is too much to expect. I never could bear the horrid odour of tobacco, and....."

"You prefer risking the happiness of your daughter to supporting a disagreeable odour for a short time," observed Lady Olivia, reproachfully.

"You do me injustice, Olivia, indeed you do. There is nothing to which I would not submit rather than you should miss so eligible a marriage, and I will go and say all I can to your father to induce him to come into our plans, and co-operate with us."

"O! how I wish I was married!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, as her mother left the room. "Once secure of being Countess of Fitzwarren, with a large settlement and a good allowance, and I will pay off this selfish man for all his sins. But to be compelled to restrain my indignation, and enact the agreeable when I am bursting with anger, is more than I can bear."

"Then you acknowledge that the brute *does* vex and annoy you, Olivia!" observed Lady Sophia; "yet when I expressed my sympathy, you resented it as an insult."

"Sympathy I never experienced from you, Sophy; and pity I scorn to accept from any one;" and Lady Olivia drew herself up proudly, and withdrew.

When Lady Wellerby sought her lord, she found him engaged in looking over the bills of the last month. This periodical occupation never failed to have a very disagreeable effect on his temper, which, never good, became most irascible on these occasions,—a fact so well known to his family in general, but to his lady-wife in particular, that his daughters and servants avoided his presence as much as possible, and Lady Wellerby dreaded to enter it.

"A pretty system of extravagance you have been carrying on during the last month," said he, looking angrily at his *cara sposa*, and pointing to a long bill on the table.

"Really, Lord Wellerby, I cannot accuse myself of extravagance, and cannot even imagine to what you refer."

"The devil you can't! But so you always say. What do you call the ices, orgeats, lemonades, and cakes, furnished for your 'at homes' once a week, without counting the expense of lights? yet you tell me, forsooth, that you cannot accuse yourself of a single act

of extravagance. Have I not cited extravagance?—yes, shameful, wanton extravagance! What occasion is there for your receiving people once a week, or at all, for the matter of that? Are there not fools enough here to throw open their rooms for company without your doing so? But I tell you what, Lady Wellerby, I'll stand no more such nonsense; if you can't live without society, go out and seek it at other people's expense."

Lady Wellerby had lived long enough with her husband to be aware that the most prudent plan to adopt with him when angry was to let him talk on until he had exhausted his breast, and then to put in her rejoinder. That moment had now arrived, and she took advantage of it.

"How a man of your knowledge of the world, Lord Wellerby, can suppose that I could go out night after night accepting the invitations of my acquaintance, without, in return, opening my doors to them at least once a week, and in the cheapest of all manners, a *soirée*, does indeed surprise me. Nay, more, I must confess I am hurt to find that, after the brilliant marriage I have secured for our daughter you betray so little sense of the value of my exertions that you reproach me for the trifling expense incurred to keep up my acquaintance with the society here, which is of course so highly advantageous to my girls."

"But having secured a husband for Olivia, where is the necessity of now receiving company once a week, Lady Wellerby?"

"Have I not still a husband to find for Sophia, and how is this to be done without my making every exertion in my power? The fact is, my dear, I came to tell you that, for Olivia's sake, it is indispensably necessary that you undraw your purse-strings, and..."

"Hold, Lady Wellerby, I foresee what is coming. Some new project of expense is, I plainly see, running in your head, and I tell you, once for all, that I will not adopt it."

Lord Wellerby was warm, drew his breath heavily, and beat his fingers on the table, two well-known symptoms of his discomposure, and indicative of an obstinate determination to retain his own opinions.

"What would you say if I were to tell you that there is considerable danger of Lord Fitzwarren jilting Olivia?—ay, you look incredulous, but I repeat it—and all because you will not give him good dinners and wine."

"Why, what the devil do you mean, Lady Wellerby? You can't be serious. No, it's impossible that any man could behave so ill?"

"I assure you I left poor Olivia in tears—yes, my lord, in tears!"

"Oh! for the matter of that, you women always have tears at will. You will cry for any thing—ay, faith, and for nothing—so I don't attach much importance to her weeping."

"She wept, Lord Wellerby, because her future husband told her that he could not dine here owing to the bad dinners and wine you gave."

"And who the devil asked him, I should like to know? Not I, I'll be sworn, for I could see no good, once he was caught, in throwing away money in dinners for him. People give them to catch husbands for their daughters, and not after they are secured. Besides, it puts me out of patience to see fools making love, when I know that in a few months after the knot is tied they'll wish each other a thousand miles off, or probably worse."

"I do not wish to interfere in your opinion; all I desire is to acquaint you that Lord Fitzwarren, by dining away from Olivia every day, and giving up a couple of hours after to his smoking, gets weaned from her society, and now shows so much indifference as to propose leaving Rome on a tour, and proceeding to Sicily, there to remain until the settlements are sent out from England, and that the marriage can take place at Naples."

"The devil he does! This looks as if he began to change his mind. And yet so far from thinking that his not dining here every day, and being tied to Olivia's apron-string all the evening had led to this, I should think that it would produce the very contrary effect; for I have known fellows so tired of the society of the girls they were to marry, while the lawyers were drawing out the settlements, that, could they have decently got out of the engagement, they would never have fulfilled it. Women never make a greater mistake than when they fancy they can't give too much of their company to their admirers, and we men could give them some good advice on this subject. Now, if this blockhead—and a blockhead I pronounced him from the first to be—begins already to be tired of Olivia, be assured the way to render him completely so will be to have him to dine here often, however good the dinners and wine offered him may be; consequently, there is no use in throwing away money in that way. If he is really determined on leaving Rome, let us affect to think his plan a very natural and eligible one, and offer not the slightest obstacle to it. Opposition always inflames a weak man to carry his schemes into effect, whereas an approval of them often induces him to abandon them. Let Olivia

be careful never to thwart him in any thing. Let her give way to all his fancies, however unreasonable they may be, and, above all, let her appear to think that whatever he says or does is and must be right, and all will turn out well. The more I reflect on it, the less reason I see to fear the result, though I was startled at the first moment when I heard he proposed leaving Rome. If he goes, she can, as they are engaged, and so soon to be married, write to him, and, by filling her letters with flattery, he will be more devoted to her when absent than present. *Flattery* is a grand secret for *keeping* as well as for *catching* men. Without it they soon tire of the society of the handsomest and cleverest women; and the least gifted, both in mind and person, of your sex, who will condescend to flatter one of mine, will be sure to gain favour with him. But it's not necessary to tell *you* this; *you* know it well enough, and tried it on me with perfect success. If you had not, I should never have been caught by *you*, I can answer for it; and, like all who have been duped, I take a spiteful pleasure in seeing others victimized."

"How can you, Lord Wellerby, assert what you must know to be unjust towards me? Our long union and my unaltered and unalterable affection ought to..."

"Stuff—nonsense, Lady Wellerby! don't try to humbug me! It's useless, perfectly useless. I understand you perfectly, and you ought to understand me by this time. Neither of us can impose on the other; but as we have the same interest in getting our girls off our hands—are launched in the same boat, as one may say—we must pull together, put on a good face, and keep our own secrets. I shan't tell the world that I know you to be a heartless, weak woman, devoted to the card-table, and you, I dare say, will not disclose to your cronies that I am an unmanageable husband—brute, I suspect, would be the term you would apply—who will not allow you to injure my fortune by your extravagance."

"Was there ever such a man!" exclaimed the mortified Lady Wellerby, as the door closed after her *brusque* husband. "He is indeed a perfect brute; and, though I have carefully refrained from even hinting to him that such is my opinion, he verifies the truth of the proverb that 'a guilty conscience needs no accuser,' and has guessed my thoughts. Well may he say he is unmanageable! What have I left undone to conciliate him? Have I not born and forborne to a degree that would have tested the patience of a saint, and all to no end? and now to have the mortification to know that it is impos-

sible to make him believe a single thing I would persuade him to! He is so cunning that there is no imposing on him; so *brusque*, that no submission will mollify him: so stingy, that it is next to impossible to get a guinea out of his purse; and so unfeeling, that he only laughs at the annoyance he inflicts. And it was to become his wife, and to endure long years of humiliation and ill-humour, that I used every art to please and win him! Would that my efforts had been unsuccessful; far better had it been to have remained single all my days than to have married him! What bright visions I indulged of wedded life before I entered its pale! With fortune and rank, I dreamt not that happiness might be unattainable; and, though I cared not for him through whom these advantages were to be acquired, I doubted not that I should be as happy as most of the fashionable women of my acquaintance. He has defeated all my schemes, destroyed all my hopes, and, were it not for the excitement furnished me by the card-table, my existence would be insupportable. Then how hard is it to be compelled to wear a mask, to smile when one is much more disposed to weep, and to make the world believe that one has the kindest husband, the most dutiful children, and the happiest home imaginable, when one is writhing under the conviction of having precisely the reverse of all these blessings! To know this, and yet not be able to wish *him* dead, is too vexatious. But such is my fate; for my jointure is so miserably small, and I am so well convinced that he will bequeath me but little should I happen to survive him, that I should find myself still worse off as a widow than as a wife. Were it not for this conviction, how would I pray to be released from the heavy chain that has so long galled me, and how joyfully would I don my sables! Well, there is no use in repining, and so I have said to myself hundreds of times during the many weary years I have dragged on with this unfeeling man. If I can but get both girls off my hands, I shall be content: and then I will defeat his plan of settling down in the country, by counterfeiting some internal malady which will require my being always in some capital within reach of medical aid.

"I must now go and advise Olivia how to play her cards, though thankless enough I must say she is, for all the good counsel I have lavished on her. How strange it is that my daughters should be so heartless! They must take after their father, it is clear, for they have none of my good-nature, or sensibility, or that perfect freedom from selfishness, which has always been so striking a characteristic

of me. Well, the fault is not mine. I have done all that was possible, both by precept and example, to render them estimable and amiable, but their father's evil nature predominates over mine in their characters, and cannot be subdued. I wish, with all my heart, I was rid of them, for they exercise my patience to its utmost limit. Heigh-ho! who would be a wife to such an odious man as Lord Wellerby, or mother to such self-willed daughters as mine?"

Thus soliloquised Lady Wellerby, and, strange to say, like many others, more addicted to scrutinise the characters of those with whom they live than to look into their own, she had made herself perfectly acquainted with all the defects of her husband and daughters—defects which she was by no means disposed to extenuate or gloss over—while she not only remained in perfect ignorance of those evil qualities existing in her own nature, but positively believed that she was possessed of no ordinary points of sensibility, good-nature, and disinterestedness—a strange self-deception, under which innumerable persons labour, and out of which few can be reasoned!

"I have seen your father, my dear Olivia," said Lady Wellerby, as she entered the *salon* where both her daughters were seated; "and I cannot prevail on him to consent to our giving better dinners and wine, in order to induce Lord Fitzwarren to dine here. I assure you, I have left nothing unsaid to bring him to our wishes, but he is impracticable, and remained deaf to my advice."

"I expected nothing else," replied Lady Olivia, who, ever since her engagement to Lord Fitzwarren, had assumed an impertinence of tone and manner towards her parents, but more especially her mother, no less unbecoming than reprehensible.

"Let me, therefore, advise you, my dear Olivia, to..."

"Pray let there be a truce to advice, mamma. I have had quite enough of it, and can assure you I have a much better chance of success in the management of my affairs, by being left to follow the suggestions of my own judgment, formed on my knowledge of the character of Lord Fitwarren, than by adopting your's or papa's."

"This ingratitude is unlooked-for, wholly so, Olivia," and Lady Wellerby put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Ingratitude!" repeated Lady Olivia; "I really am at a loss to comprehend what ingratitude is to be found in my preferring

to take the management of that which concerns only me, and in the most important event of my whole life, into my own hands!" and she arose and left the room without one word of kindness to her mother.

## CHAPTER XVII

Though love of life most mortals own,
How strangely is their folly shown,
When still, to shorten its brief span,
So many different modes they plan!
To ball and opera, rout and play,
They rush to while the hours away;
Unconscious they too fleetly fly
Without the aids that men supply
When pleasure they so madly court,
And to her festivals resort,
To vanquish Time what gold they spend!
But he's their conqueror in the end.

Never, since the bereavement of her husband and son, had Mrs. Sydney experienced so much happiness as since her daughter had been affianced to Strathern. Convinced of his good principles and fine nature, she felt that she could safely confide the happiness of her child to his care; and in this firm belief of his worth, a load of anxiety was removed from her mind. Let death now come when it might—and Mrs. Sydney often reflected on the uncertainty of life, reflections which came home to her heart, as based on the delicacy of her own health—she need have no fears for her Louisa: *she* would have a guide and protector to steer and support her through the intricate mazes of life, when a fond mother would no longer be near to watch over her; and this thought was a balm to the heart of the anxious parent, who might truly be said to live but for her child. But how was Mrs. Sydney's happiness increased when Strathern acquainted her with his desire of not separating her from her daughter! She had looked forward to such a separation as inevitable, and, though it cost her much pain, and that it required the exertion of all her self-control to contemplate it with calmness, she had made up her resolution to submit to this great sacrifice, whenever it should be required, rather than offer any obstacle to the marriage of Louisa, whenever she saw that her affections were

engaged. Nor was it from many men, however worthy they might be, and however great her desire not to be separated from her child, that Mrs. Sydney would have liked to accept the proposal of Strathern to reside always with him and his wife. She had seen too many examples of the discomfort to both parties produced by similar arrangements in other families, not to feel timid and nervous on such points; but all that she had observed of Strathern had assured her that with so amiable and rational a son-in-law she had nothing to fear in taking up her abode beneath his roof, and consequently the certainty of not being left alone, a solitary valetudinarian, to wear out the autumn and winter of her days, cheered and comforted her. The devoted attachment of Strathern to his *fiancée* would have made him an attentive and kind son to her mother, even had that lady much fewer claims to his consideration and respect than had Mrs. Sydney; but, impressed with the highest esteem for her fine qualities, and an affectionate regard for her charming manners and invariable kindness to himself, he felt towards her a lively sentiment of gratitude for the treasure she was about to consign to his care, and a determination to justify her confidence by every means in his power.

The selfish jealousy often experienced by mothers on observing the influence rapidly acquired by future husbands, over the minds of their daughters, sometimes almost superseding their own, was a stranger to the breast of Mrs. Sydney, and it was with unfeigned pleasure that she daily marked the progress Strathern was making in leading Louisa to adopt many of his opinions, and to modify some of her own. His taste for, and enjoyment of her fireside, in preference to the balls and parties nightly given at Rome, greatly pleased Mrs. Sydney, and when he would peruse aloud one of her favourite authors, pausing occasionally to elicit her and her daughter's sentiments on it, and giving his own, she felt that their domestic circle could never be otherwise than rational and agreeable, cheered by the presence of so intellectual and amiable a companion.

Felicity has always a most beneficial effect on fine natures, and never was this fact more clearly proved than in Louisa Sydney. Happy herself, she was desirous of rendering those around her so, and her fond mother saw with joy her increased cheerfulness, the roses of health glow more beautifully than ever on her delicate cheeks, and her eyes sparkle with new lustre.

About this time, a grand *bal masqué* was to be given by the Duc

de Belmonté, to which all the society at Rome was invited. The invitations were not limited to the *noblesse* alone, the position of the *duc* as banker inducing him to extend them to all those who had letters of large credit to his house; and though at his dinners, assemblies, and small balls only the best company could be found, the *monstres fêtes*, given once or twice a year, included all at Rome who were deemed admissible, and presented a most amusing, though somewhat motley scene. Its novelty tempted Mrs. Sydney and her daughter to attend it, escorted by Strathern, and the brilliant *coup d'œil* which met their eyes as they entered made them feel glad that they had done so. The number of *salons* thrown open on these occasions, their loftiness and spacious dimensions, the splendour of their decorations, the fine works of art that graced them, with the blaze of wax-lights, and profusion of flowers spread around, and the crowds of persons of both sexes, attired in the richest and most picturesque costumes — many of them sparkling with diamonds—rendered the whole one scene of enchantment.

Louisa Sydney, with the timidity peculiar to young and sensitive women, experienced an emotion almost amounting to alarm as she entered the vast suite of apartments, that made her unconsciously cling closer to the arm of her betrothed, who, gratified by this tacit appeal to his protection, pressed the fair and rounded arm that rested on his own to his breast, and felt how much the presence of a beloved object can enhance the pleasure of every scene of amusement. His consisted more in marking the surprise and gratification of the lovely Louisa, than in any interest derived from the gaiety around him, for, while near her, he required no extrinsic cause of pleasure: but her artless expressions of admiration at the splendid *coup d'œil*, and the feminine timidity which drew her closer to his side, charmed him. The black silk mask which concealed the beautiful face of his *fiancée*, by preventing Strathern from dwelling on its changeful expression as he was wont, only rendered him more sensible to the exquisite sweetness of the whispered tones of her voice, and to the happiness of feeling her lovely arm resting in all the confidence of love on his own. The sounds of gay music, too, exerted their usual influence on his spirits, and he acknowledged, for the first time in his life, that a *bal masqué* could be a very exhilarating amusement.

After a *promenade* through the rooms, achieved with no little difficulty, owing to the crowds that filled them, Mrs. Sidney, com-

plaining of fatigue, seated herself by some matrons of her acquaintance, and left her daughter with Strathern, to wander amidst the groups whose fanciful costumes she so much admired. Mr. Rhymer soon discovered Mrs. Sydney, and, placing himself by her side, commenced a conversation with her.

"You are, I dare say, surprised to see *me* here; and I must confess that I am no less so at meeting you. What could induce the refined and sensible Mrs. Sydney to venture into such a motley scene?"

"The desire of giving pleasure to my daughter."

"I thougt so. Where do a mother's sacrifices end?"

"As yet I have been spared any."

"Indeed! you are, then, fortunate—or, perhaps so willing to make them, that they seem light—yet the being dragged into such a promiscuous and insufferable crowd as this might by most mothers be deemed a sacrifice of no slight magnitude offered up at the shrine of maternal affection!"

"I really do not view it as such—nay, more, though at the risk of forfeiting some portion of your respect by the confession, I must avow that when no peculiar present griefs press on me, I find my spirits cheered by observing, if I cannot warmly participate in, the gaiety of others."

"Indeed! Well, I should not have thought so. But you ladies are so *very* disinterested, so prone to give up all your own pleasures to gratify the whims and caprices of those dear to you, that nothing which you do ought to surprise one. And so you find pleasure in this motley scene?"

"As a spectatress."

"I do not know whether or not this total abnegation of self is desirable or enviable. Do you not feel that your own fireside and a book, or two or three rational companions, would be far preferable to this heated and impure atmosphere, and the noise around?"

"I shall enjoy those comforts only the more from the force of contrast. A scene like the present, if resorted to more frequently than once, or at most twice a year, would soon cease to amuse me, but, seen only once, its novelty diverts."

"Miss Sydney is, I dare say, delighted with this *bal masqué*—more so, probably, than her future husband. Strathern is not a man to be very much charmed at finding himself in a crowd, the

greater portion of persons composing which he could never in all probability meet elsewhere."

"He nevertheless appeared to enjoy it very much."

"*Appeared!* Ah, Mrs. Sydney, we must not always place implicit faith in appearances."

"Strathern is not one to assume an appearance of pleasure, if he did not feel it."

"Heaven forbid I should say he was! I only meant that, finding Miss Sydney likes gaiety so much, he has, like you, my dear madam, yielded up his own more sober and rational taste, in order that she might enjoy hers."

"You labour under a mistake in supposing that my daughter is more addicted to frequent scenes of gaiety than Mr. Strathern is."

"I crave your pardon, if I am wrong; but it *did* strike me that a *bal masqué*—and, above all, in a house where a letter of credit to the bank serves as a ticket of admission to the balls at the palace—would be the last place where affianced lovers, who coul enjoy each other's society at home, would be found;" and Mr. Rhymer looked unutterable things. "What a crowd!" resumed he. "There goes the sapient Earl of Fitzwarren: he assumes no disguise, but appears in his natural character of a horse jockey. How perfectly at home he looks! not so the lady of his love, attired as the gentle daughter of the Capulets, the fair Guilietta. Ye Gods! behold the maid, 'who loved not wisely but too well,' leaning on the arm of an English jockey! It is too much!" and the rigid muscles of Mr. Rhymer, albeit unused to the mirthful mood, relaxed into laughter. "And see," said he, as soon as he could resume his gravity, "the lady Sophia dressed as Desdemona! Who could blame the Moor for strangling such a one? Not I, I'll be sworn. But, lack-a-day, she has found no Othello, and is compelled to walk with her lady-mother, who is attired as Queen Elizabeth. Was there ever such a group? Look how stately and grand Lady Wellerby queens it! and how monstrously ugly she appears in that trying costume! What could tempt the silly woman to make such an absurd figure of herself?"

Lady Wellerby having recognised Mrs. Sydney, came up and addressed her. "I see," observed she, "that you, like me, have been obliged to remove your mask, owing to the insufferable heat. My dress, too, is so dreadfully heavy that I feel quite overpowered by its weight. Where is Miss Sydney, and what is her costume?"

"Merely a fancy dress."

"How odd! Every one I see here assumes some character or other."

"And some are right in so doing," said Mr. Rhymer; "for perhaps it is the only occasion on which they have a presentable one."

"Mr. Rhymer always says clever things—doesn't he, Mrs. Sydney? but, somehow, I don't always understand them at first."

"You do me honour, madam," replied Mr. Rhymer, with a grave face, and a low bow.

"Does not Sophia look well as Desdemona? Olivia is costumed as Juliet, and looks charmingly. My girls are so fond of reading Shakspeare, they know half his tragedies by heart, and they would dress in his characters."

"They have made a happy selection, it must be owned," said Mr. Rhymer; "but I see no Romeo, no Othello, to attend their respective ladies."

Before Lady Wellerby could reply, Lord Fitzwarren, with his *fiancée*, came up. "Here we are, my hearties, ready to mount and ride a race for any sum you name," said he, assuming the air and manner peculiar to an individual of the class he was representing.

"I never saw your lordship so much at home as in that dress," observed Mr. Rhymer sarcastically; "it is a pity you ever should change it."

"Well said, old un! I did not think you had so much wit as to find it out. Only think, Livy wanted to make me come here as Romeo, a love-sick swain! I saw the part acted at the Opera, when the fellow did nothing but sing like a dying swan, not that I ever heard one, although I have several on the lake at my place. 'No,' said I, 'I'll be hanged, Livy, if you'll ever get me to figure as a lackadaisical lover! You may act Juliet if you have set your heart on it, but I'll dress up as nothing but a jockey. Haven't done it amiss—have I? Smart jacket, well fitting leathers, good boots, pretty cap—why there's not a man here who ever saw a race at Epsom or Ascot that won't admit that I look precisely as the first-rate jockeys there do."

"Nobody can deny it; and, what is more, your lordship talks—ay, and thinks, exactly as these clever persons do;" and Mr. Rhymer smiled maliciously as he uttered the remark.

"You need not be so ill-natured, Mr. Rhymer," said Lady Olivia,

vexed at the irony which was obvious to her, though not to him to whom it was directed.

"He's not a bit ill-natured, Livy, which surprises me! for having heard he was given to say spiteful things, I have kept a sharp look-out on him."

"His lordship renders me justice, fair Juliet, and admits the truth of my assertion. How lamentable it is that *such* a Juliet should have no Romeo, though, perhaps, the being escorted by a jockey is more *piquant* from the novelty!"

"Do let us move on. I hate to be near that spiteful old man, who looks as if made ill by his own malice," said Lady Olivia to Lord Fitzwarren, in a tone of voice which, if meant to be low, was not sufficiently so to prevent Mr. Rhymer from hearing it, as might be guessed by his face, which looked even more yellow and cynical than ordinary.

"The gentle Lady of the Moor has lost her Othello, or, probably, has never found one," observed Mr. Rhymer. "It does, it must be confessed, look somewhat incongruous to see her walking with the virgin queen. Really, Lady Wellerby, your circle has distinguished itself by the choice of characters selected. So patriotic too!—to have chosen the robes of Elizabeth, and two heroines from the tragedies of our immortal bard!"

"I dare say you mean to ridicule us, Mr. Rhymer, though I don't quite see the point. Every one says," and Lady Wellerby looked as if she had said something clever, "you are disposed to be severe."

"How odd! I really thought that I passed for a very harmless and good-natured person. But, at all events, Lady Wellerby, it would be a waste of time to turn *you* into ridicule," and Mr. Rhymer glanced around as if appealing to those present.

"So here you are at last, Webworth! what the deuce kept you so late! Here has Desdemona been waiting for her Othello for the last two hours."

"I assure you, Fitz, I could not get my dress ready before. It was only brought home a quarter of an hour ago. I have a thousand excuses to make to the fair Desdemona," and Mr. Webworth approached the lady to offer his arm, which, though vexed at his coming so late, she gladly accepted.

"Now, am I not a good-natured fellow?" observed Lord Fitzwarren to his bride elect. "I gave that poor fellow, Webworth, a hundred pounds to provide his costume, that your sister Sophy

should not be without a beau to escort her. He did not at all like blacking his face, I can tell you, but I made him."

"What! give a hundred pounds for such a shabby dress as that!" exclaimed Lady Olivia. "Why, I dare say, if the truth were known, he hired it for a few pounds, for it looks as if it had figured in the last carnival."

"Look, Livy, what a lovely figure comes here! What a shape! and how beautifully dressed!"

"I see nothing remarkable in her," answered Lady Olivia, "and have noticed several more attractive-looking women since we have been here."

"See how that conjurer follows her about!" said Lord Fitzwarren. "I have noticed him hovering around her all the evening."

While he yet spoke, a person, disguised as a conjurer, taking advantage of the male companion of the lady whose fine shape had riveted Lord Fitzwarren's attention being engaged in replying to the *banales plaisanteries* of a group of masks who encircled him, approached close behind the fair incognito, and whispered in her ear. She shrank away from his contact; yet he still addressed her, evidently without her companion having observed it. When the latter turned round, the conjurer quickly disappeared, and now the lady and her companion joined the group where Lord Fitzwarren and Lady Olivia stood.

"You tremble, dearest—you are not well," said the gentleman. "Take off your mask, my beloved, and you will be relieved;" and he untied the riband which attached it; when the lovely face of Louisa Sydney, pale as marble, was revealed. "What is the matter, dear Louisa? A moment ago you were so well, so joyous, and now. . . ."

"It was only a slight faintness—I shall be better by and by;" but her tremulous voice and agitated countenance contradicted the assertion. Strathern led her to a seat next to Mrs. Sydney, vacated by Mr. Rhymer; and the mother, alarmed at the changed aspect of her daughter, became herself nearly as pale.

"Had we not better return home?" suggested the anxious parent.

"Oh! no, mother: let us sit here a little while, and I shall soon be myself again."

"This is one of the pleasant results of *bals masqués*," observed Mr. Rhymer. "I am sure I wonder how any one comes to them, Heat, crowds, noise, and deleterious odours *will* work their effect on delicate constitutions—a-hem! All the family are consumptive,"

continued he to Lady Melcombe, in a somewhat lower tone, but still loud enough to be heard by Strathern. "What a life of misery awaits the man who weds this beautiful but sickly flower!"

Strathern turned from him with terror to look into the face of his beloved; and his alarmed countenance, as he bent his inquiring eyes on her, convinced the cynical Rhymer that the Parthian dart he had let fly had achieved its object.

"I have spoilt his evening's amusement, however," thought Rhymer. "He was so wondrously, so insultingly happy? I hate to see people happy. But it's easy enough to interrupt their enjoyment, and that's some comfort."

And now all eyes turned on a lady who walked through the noble suite of rooms, costumed as Mary Queen of Scots, but who had found means to destroy the picturesque beauty of the dress, by the enormous quantity of precious stones with which nearly every portion of it was covered. Little was the figure of the wearer calculated to set off this costume. Coarse and ill-shaped, her movements were so awkward as to render her assumption of the character of the lovely Mary Stuart perfectly ridiculous; and the beholders seemed sensible of this, for they indulged in smiles rather too openly to be consistent with the politeness generally maintained in good society.

"How rude they are!" said the would-be Queen of Scots to a lady on whose arm she leaned. "And they call this fine company? One would suppose they never saw so many diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds before. I wish I could have put on *all* my jewels, and then they would, I think, stare even more; and I would have put them on, only you persuaded me not."

"Pray, madam, do not speak so loud," whispered the companion, who, habited in a plain dress of black silk, of the fashion worn by female attendants in the time of Queen Elizabeth, seemed nervous and alarmed at finding herself in so great a crowd.

"Where can my lord be?" asked the richly attired but vulgar representative of the Queen of Scots. "His lordship promised to meet me here. Keep a sharp look-out for him, Mrs. Bernard, for I am anxious to have some one of consequence to lean on, in order to keep those staring people at a more respectful distance. I really am afraid they may snatch some of the diamonds off my dress. If I had known there was to be such a mob, I would have asked the Pope to send a few of his guards to protect me."

"Admirable!" exclaimed Mr. Rhymer. "This Queen of Dia-

monds, rather than Queen of Scots, is no other than the dreadful widow of the stockbroker, whose vicinity drove me from the hotel, where, previously to her arrival, I found myself comfortably lodged. Never was there such a creature. The woman on whose arm she leans is her *dame de compagnie*, her *souffre douleur*, and the lord to whom she refers must surely be the Lord of Misrule. I wish some one would address her, for her conversation must be, I think, very amusing."

"Suppose you speak to her," said Lady Wellerby.

"I have not courage for the undertaking," replied Mr. Rhymer.

"I will, for I like a bit of fun, provided Mr. Rhymer tells me what I had best say to her," said Lord Fitzwarren. "I suppose that, unless I talk of bulls and bears, in the phraseology of the Stock Exchange, she won't understand me."

"Just ask leave to present her to her sister, Queen Elizabeth," whispered Rhymer, delighted at the notion of vexing Lady Wellerby, through the medium of her future son-in-law.

"By Jove, I will!" And off marched Lord Fitzwarren, *malgré* all the objections and entreaties of Lady Olivia, who still walked by his side, "not to speak to that dreadful-looking person."

"I hope your Majesty is quite well, and that David Rizzio is flourishing," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"I know no such person, and never heard his name before," replied Mrs. Maclaurin.

"How strange!" remarked Lord Fitzwarren, "for it has always been asserted that your Majesty had a peculiar *tendresse* for him."

"Ten dresses! Then a very great fib was asserted, for I put on no dress at all to please any such person, let alone ten," said the lady, mistaking the sense of the word *tendresse*.

"You have been accused of being rather a harsh and stern wife to Darnley. People have gone as far as to say that you blew him up."

"Then people told a very great story, for I never knew any one of the name. But what right have you to come and cross-question me about two men I never saw or heard of in all my born days?"

"Pray, madam, don't answer him," whispered Mrs. Bernard.

"But I will, though. Why shouldn't I answer him? Haven't I as good a right to speak as he has?"

"Do you ever bestow a thought on Darnley's successor, Bothwell?—him whom you urged to divorce his wife that he might wed with you?"

"Was there ever the like? Why you must be mad to torment

me in this manner about men whose names I never before heard."

"Your Majesty is not, perhaps, aware that your sister, Queen Elizabeth, is present at these revels, and may take it amiss if you do not interchange greetings with her."

"Do you *mane* ould Queen Bess!" demanded the representative of Mary Stuart.

"Certainly I do. Permit me to lead you to her august presence."

"I don't want to know any thing about her."

"Ah! I see you have not forgotten your old quarrels, which is the more extraordinary, as people said you lost your head about them; and when one loses one's head, you know, or ought to know, the memory is apt to go too."

"I lose my head! I quarrel with Queen Elizabeth! I don't know what you are after, unless you mane to try to humbug me."

"Ask the lady who attends your Majesty, if Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth were not contemporaries; nay, more, if it is not befitting that they should meet and hold converse together!"

"What does the jackey mane, Mrs. Bernard? Is he in earnest, or only wanting to make fun?"

The loud tones of Mrs. Macburin's voice, no less than the extraordinary brilliancy of her dress, drew a circle around her, who, much amused with the *naïveté* of her replies, could not repress the risibility they excited. Anxious to move away from the spot where they at present drew so much, and, to her, such painful attention, Mrs. Bernard advised her Majesty of Scotland to seek her sister queen, and, marshalled by Lord Fitzwarren, she approached Lady Wellerby, who, unmasked, sat conversing with Mrs. Sydney and some other ladies.

"Will our gracious Queen of England permit one of the most faithful of her majesty's subjects to present the Queen of Scotland to her?"

"Our sister of Scotland is welcome," said Lady Wellerby, willing to humour her future son-in-law's joke.

"I'm much obleeged to you, ma'am, and hope you are quite well."

"I should be more at ease, sister of Scotland, had not a rumour reached our royal ear that you had assumed our arms, and presumed to doubt our just right to them."

"Who ever said so is a story-teller. I can take my oath I never dreamt of such a thing. What should I do with your arms, when I have got very good ones of my own?"

This reply conquered the gravity of the circle who heard it, and even the representative of the maiden queen could not restrain her laughter.

"What are they laughing at?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin. "I think they're not over-mannerly."

"Forgive my mirth, fair sister, and answer me touching the report of your representing yourself as likely soon to inherit our crown. We hope your Majesty can clear yourself from that and other stains on your fame."

"What on earth does she mane?" asked Mrs. Maclaurin. "I never wanted her crown, and can have one of my own, if I like it."

This reply renewed the laughter of all the circle.

"Most injured innocence! how have you been defamed!" said Mr. Rhymer, turning up his eyes.

"Only tell me by who, and I'll bring an action against him, or my name isn't Mary Maclaurin."

The laughter now became general, and the victim, to this mystification, no longer able to control her feelings, tore her mask from her face, revealing as she did so remarkably plain a countenance, flushed to nearly a crimson hue from heat and anger, and which appeared to still greater disadvantage from the bandeau of diamonds that encircled her brow beneath the black velvet cap, which likewise was enriched with brilliants.

"I'm not ashamed to show my face, I can tell you," said the wrathful Mrs. Maclaurin. "I'm no more a Queen of Scotland than you are of England. I guessed from the first that you were not disposed to be polite, for all you pretended to speak so civilly; but I don't care a button for you all put together. Ay, ye may laugh, but it's my belief I could buy ye all. I'll count hundreds, ay, and thousands, too, with the best of ye any day in the week, and honestly come by, too."

"Oh! madam, do let us retire; pray, come away," urged the embarrassed and alarmed Mrs. Bernard.

"I'll do no such thing. I have as good a right, and better, too, to be here than they have."

"Good gracious, Sophia! what has happened to your dress?" exclaimed Lady Wellerby, as that lady, leaning on the arm of Mr. Webworth, approached.

"It's only the black that has come off Othello's arm," replied Lady Sophia.

"Capital fun. Ha, ha, ha!" said Lord Fitzwarren, laughing

loudly at the misadventure of his future sister-in-law. "Why, Sophy, you look as if you had been up the chimney, and poor Webworth is the blackamoor washed nearly white."

"Do let us return home, Louisa, I am quite fatigued; and you, dearest, look as if you were equally so," said Mrs. Sydney.

"Yes, mother, I shall be glad to find myself at home," answered Louisa, languidly; and both ladies, escorted by Strathern, left the *bal masqué*.

"Why are you so silent, so dispirited, dearest!" whispered Strathern, as they descended the stairs. "You are ill, I fear: if so, tell me—let me go for medical advice. Your arm trembles—yes, you *are* ill, Louisa, and you have concealed it from me!"

"I shall be better to-morrow—I am only fatigued," replied Miss Sydney; but there was something so wholly different in her tone and manner, that Strathern felt still more alarmed. He accompanied Mrs. Sydney and her daughter to their abode, but still Louisa remained silent, only replying by monosyllables to the reiterated questions of her mother and lover, but refusing to have recourse to medical advice. When he handed them from their carriage, no pressure of the hand marked Louisa's recognition of his own warm one; no smile, however faint, acknowledged her sense of his tenderness and anxiety for her health; and, when he tore himself away from her, he felt more wretched than even her indisposition could account for.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"When men, to gain some selfish end,
To plot and scheme will condescend,
Though high may be their rank and birth,
They'll find the low-born of the earth
Presume no more respect to pay
Than if the high were low as they;
And though bright honour may be fled,
And ev'ry noble impulse dead
Within the breast where love of gold
Has fix'd its strong debasing hold,
Yet pride may live to writhe with pain,
When humbled thus by love of gain."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu continued to make a rapid progress in the good graces of Mrs. Maclaurin, notwithstanding that she oc-

casionally felt annoyed and half offended at the pertinacity with which he resisted her entreaties to be introduced to his friends and acquaintances, and at the evident dislike he had to exhibit himself in public with her. He always found some excuse for refusing to accompagny her in her *giros*, or to give her his arm in any of her promenades; nevertheless, though vexed and mortified at the moment when these refusals occurred, she had too much value for a lord—and a good-looking one, too—to quarrel with him. He dined with her frequently, taking care, however, to assist her in inspecting the *menu*, a task which she was totally incapable of performing alone, and he daily acquired such influence over her, that she now seldom took any step, or formed any plan, without consulting him. This daily intercourse, while it served to reveal all her peculiarities and defects, brought so few good qualities to light, that Lord Alexander Beaulieu's dislike to her rather increased than diminished. He was as much shocked and disgusted at her gross selfishness, and unblushing self-indulgence, as if *he* were exempt from similar failings, while her vulgarity was looked on by him as a sufficient cause, if not excuse, for any ill-treatment she might hereafter receive at his hands. Mrs. Maclaurin might have possessed all the faults he had discovered in her character, and even more, without incurring the sense of loathing he experienced towards her, had she, like so many of his aristocratic friends, been able to shade them by the gossamer veil of conventional good-breeding and refinement of manner; but the absence of this peculiar attribue of polished society, not the existence of the defects themselves, shocked and disgusted him, and he believed himself vastly her superior, because his selfishness was not so openly revealed.

While Lord Alexander Beaulieu sat in his room one day, his door was opened, and, to his surprise, the *femme de chambre* of Mrs. Maclaurin entered. "I did know you vas alone, milor," said she. "I have vatched great many days to find you alone, for I vant very moche, very moche indeed, to speak vid you."

"You do me honour, mademoiselle—permit me," and the *roué* lordling seized the hand of the coquettish French woman and kissed her.

"Have done, milor, have done. I not come for you to make lofe," observed the *femme de chambre*, disengaging herself from the grasp of Lord Alexander. "I come for *de choses bien graves*—I come to tell you dat I know you vish to marry *madame* and dat if

you make it my interest you *sall* marry her. Are ye safe? Vill nobody come?"

"Retire into that chamber, mademoiselle, and I will ring the bell to give orders that I am not at home to any one."

Mademoiselle Justine did as she was told, and Lord Alexander, having dismissed his servant with instructions to keep off all visiters, resumed his *tête-à-tête* with her.

"Madame is too uglee, and too stoopeed and vulgaire, milor, for any person *comme il faut* to tink of marrying her, except for her moneys. *Elle est une imbécile*, a fool in some tings, and I can make her do vat I like. She sall marry you, milor, *if I like* it, if I *not* like it, she *sall not* marry you."

"You are too *aimable*, too pretty, charming Justine," and again Lord Alexander attempted to embrace the *femme de chambre*, who, however, resisted, and, putting him aside, resumed—

"Do not interrupt me, milor; I do not vant de compliments; I vant to come to de point at vonce. If you vant to marry madame, you moste have Justine for your friend."

"To be sure, my charming Justine. Who would not be proud to have such a friend? I *do* wish to marry Mrs. Maclaurin, and if you will assist me in the affair you will not find me ungrateful. *Au reste*, madame does not show any disinclination to favour my suit. She seems more anxious to become my wife than I am to give her that title."

"You say true, milor: she does vish to be miladi: she lofes de milors; *mais, if I* do not vish it, I know de way to break off de affair at vonce."

"But you would not be so cruel, my pretty Justine. Ah! if madame was only half as pretty as you are," and Lord Alexander threw as much admiration into his countenance as possible.

"Dat is not now de question, milor. De question is, how much money vill you give me if I arrange vid madame to marry you?"

"You shall find me all generosity, my pretty Justine. Who would not be generous to such a dear, charming creature? And as soon as I am married, I will give you whatever sum you require."

"All de men, milor, promise de vomen every ting you dey vant to get any ting, but forget it after."

"I swear to you."

"I do not value de svearing, milor; vat I vant is a bond—yes, a *parchemin* bond—*signed* and *sealed*, by vich you vill engage to

pay me five tousand pounds in von year after you are married to madame. Moste vomen in my place vould demand tree times as moche, but I am more *traitable*, and will be satisfied wid a leetle."

"Five thousand pounds is a great deal of money," replied Lord Alexander, looking grave. "I should have thought, my pretty Justine, that five hundred would have been quite enough to demand. After all, *ma belle*, Mrs. Maclaurin is not indifferent on this matter. I really believe that such is her attachment to me, that not even your influence, great as I am willing to believe it, could prevent her following her own inclinations."

"Ah! you tink so, milor. Ha! ha! ha! *Nous verrons*—you sall see. You not know madame so vell as I do, *mais vous verrez*. *Au reste*, I must be gone; I have not de time to stay and make bargains; but ven it is too late, you vill be sorry you not make me your friend, dat is all; so, adieu."

"Do not be in such a hurry to leave me, charming Justine. You really are so pretty that I can think of nothing but you while you are present;" and Lord Alexander Beaulieu attempted to put his arm round her waist.

"No, milor, I will have no nonsense. It is all very vell to say I am so *charmante*, but, *malgré tout cela*, it is very plain you tink more of saving money dan of my looks. Five tousand pounds is but a little sum to pay for twenty tousand a year; and you sall find, if I am not your friend, madame vill never marry you, for all you are *un si joli garçon*."

"But is there no way, Justine, in which we could arrange this matter without the trouble and publicity of having a bond drawn up?"

"Yes, dere is von vay, and very easy vay too; give me de five tousand pounds at vonce, and dere need be no bond—no *parchemin*."

"This is impossible, Justine. I have not so much money."

"*Comment donc*, milor? You are a milor *Anglais*, vho all de vorld say are so riche, and not have five tousand pounds! I am glad you told me dis—very glad indeed—for now I know it, how can I let my *pauvre maîtresse* marry a man who is so poor? No, I must tell her dat you only vant to marry her for her money, and dat you vould spend it all, and leave her vidout anyting for herself. I vill say, 'no more fine dresses and diamonds—no more expensive *déjeuners*, *dîners*, *soupers*, *et vins rares*,' and you sall see she tell you she cannot marry you."

"But if I inform her that you are a mercenary person, who turned against me because I would not buy your good offices at the extravagant price you demanded, your mistress, *ma belle*, may be disposed to give you your *congé*, an event I should so much regret, for it would be a great comfort to me, Justine, with so plain a wife as madame will make, to have so very pretty a person as you in the house."

"Ah! *je vous voyais venir de loin*, milor. But it vill not do, *vous vous trompez*, milor. I tell you vonce more, *you* never can hurt *me*, but I can turn madame so much against *you*, dat she sall not care one pin for you in two days if I vill it. Now I have said de trut, I sall not stay any longer, so *bon jour*."

"I can refuse you nothing, *charmante* Justine; you do just as you will with me. I never could resist a pretty woman in my life."

"And I suppose, milor, you tink de pretty woman cannot resist you." And Justine laughed, and looked archly at Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"Then it is quite understood," said he, somewhat embarrassed by the *air moqueur* with which she regarded him, "that now I have consented to your extravagant conditions, I may count on your assistance in carrying my views on madame into effect."

"*Certainement*, ven you have sign de bond, milor, but not before. I have von friend here, very clever man. He will draw it, and make it all right. *En attendant*, I just tell you, milor, dat I like pretty tings, and *gâteaux* and *bonbons* very moche. *On dit, que les petits cadeaux entretiennent l'amitié*, and I do believe de proverb is very true. I need say no more, and so adieu, milor."

The easy assurance of the Frenchwoman surprised and somewhat embarrassed Lord Alexander Beaulieu for the moment, but, quickly recovering his presence of mind, and thinking it right to affect a tender gallantry of manner towards the *femme de chambre*, he took her hand, pressed it, and attempted to kiss her.

"No, milor—no, no, have done; I not vant your caresses, and I vill not permit dem. Keep all dem for madame—she, *pauvre femme*, may value dem; I do not." And, disengaging herself from his grasp, Justine glided from the room, first taking care to ascertain that there was no one in the ante-room to notice her egress from it.

"Hang the impudent and cunning Jezabel!" said he to himself. "There is a lurking devil in her eye, that tells me it would be unwise to make her my enemy, and she most decidedly would

become so were I to refuse compliance with her conditions. Five thousand pounds! What an extortion! Why it is the general portion allotted in marriage settlements for the younger children of the aristocracy. Many a Lord Henry and Lady Mary, bred up in affluence, and surrounded in infancy by all the gauds of splendour, have no more to depend on; yet this impudent sticker of pins, and inheritress of cast-off finery, will be content with no less for her services; that is, not for forwarding my marriage with her odious mistress, but simply for not interfering to prevent it. My union with that woman is a bitter pill to swallow, however well gilded it may be. Never did I see such a creature. But I must not reflect on her, for the more I think the less do I find my courage equal to support this hateful marriage; and yet, if it does not take place, I shall be left penniless. I must go to her, and bear as best I may all the *bêtises* and vulgarities she is always sure to utter."

"I am so glad you are come," said Mrs. Maclaurin, as Lord Alexander Beaulieu entered her *salon*. "Look here. At last I have an opportunity of entering into fashionable society. I'm so glad. Here's the card," and she extended one to her visiter, who perused it with no peculiar pleasure. "Why, positively, my lord, one might suppose from your long face that you were sorry, instead of being, glad, that I am invited to this ball. Mrs. Bernard says it is to be a masked one, and I dote on masquerades. I have been to two public ones at the Opera House in London, where there were such crowds, one could hardly move about, and it was delightful. Every one speaking to every one, without knowing a bit who each other were. That's what I like; no ceremony—all fun and gaiety. To be sure, when, after supper, all the men got tipsy, and pushed me about, it was rather alarming."

Lord Alexander recoiled in horror at the thought of his future wife having figured at a *bal masqué* at the Opera House, and his countenance revealed some portion of his disgust.

"Don't you like masquerades?" asked the lady.

"Not particularly, and more especially public ones."

"How strange! Why, what a funny chap you must be! Well, for my part, I dote on them. You should have seen me at those balls. I went to one as a sultan."

"A sultana, madam," said Mrs. Bernard, timidly.

"Well, sultan or sultana, where's the difference, I should like to know? It's all one, for both wear fine clothes and loose

trousers, all spangled, and jewels — ay, and a dagger in the waistband."

Lord Alexander found it difficult to look grave, and Mrs. Bernard appeared really distressed at this exposure of the ignorance of Mrs. Maclaurin!

"At the other masquerade I appeared as the Queen of Sheba."

"As the Queen of Sheba!" reiterated Lord Alexander in astonishment.

"Yes, as the Queen of Sheba, for that gave me an opportunity of wearing all my diamonds: and, I assure you, that no lady at the masquerade, whatever her grandeur might be, wore one quarter so many. The people did nothing but stare and admire me. One said I was the Queen of Diamonds, and a trumpcard—wasn't that a pretty compliment?"

"But, seriously, I hope you do not intend to go to this *bal costumé*."

"What do you call it? A ball cost chew me, eh?"

"Yes, a *bal costumé*."

"Mind, Mrs. Bernard, you don't forget a ball cost chew me. What a funny name! — ha! ha! ha! — it makes me laugh, whether I will or no. But why do you hope I won't go? Where's the objection? Haven't I been shut up here like a prisoner, only wearing my jewels before you? and now here's an opportunity to put 'em all on and astonish the natives, as they say in England, or at least astonish all the company that will be present."

"I am sorry you have set your heart upon attending this *bal*. It will be by no means select: and, as you have no acquaintances at Rome, you will not, I fear, find it agreeable."

"But won't it be a capital opportunity to *make* plenty of acquaintances? Sure, can't I speak to every one I meet, the same as I did at the masquerades at the Opera House in London?"

"Such a proceeding in a lady would not be deemed decorous."

"Oh, hang decorum! When a woman has a fortune like mine, she needn't bother herself about decorum. And where's the harm of my amusing myself? I don't mean to say any thing bad to any one; and, when people see my jewels, they'll guess well enough that it could only be a rich person like me that could afford to have such, and they'll not be sorry for my making their acquaintance; besides, you'll come with me, and, leaning on your arm, I have nothing to dread."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu positively changed colour at this pro-

posal. What, exhibit himself in public with this vulgar woman, who would be sure to render herself the most conspicuous person present! The very thought of it shocked him, but, not knowing what excuse to make at the moment, and determining to get out of the scrape when the time came, he merely bowed, and said, "Of course I shall be proud and happy to attend you."

"Now, there's a good creature; I'm so glad you make no more objections. Do you know, my lord, that I am the strangest creature in the world. I can't bear not to have my own way in everything, but when I have—and I always take care that *I do have* —I let every body do as he or she pleases; that's my plan, and I think it's a very good one. Mrs. Bernard, go and ask Justine for the case I was looking at this morning; the small case, I mean."

When Mrs. Bernard withdrew, Mrs. Maclaurin put on one of her most winning smiles, and, turning to Lord Alexander Beaulieu, said, "I have sent her for an elegant present I mean to give you; it's a large diamond pin, and will look beautiful in your cravat."

Something of the feeling of a gentleman crossed the lordling's mind for a moment, and sent the blood to his cheek, while he uttered something about his unwillingness to accept so valuable a gift, and reminded her that he wore only the most simple and least costly shirt-pins.

"And more's the pity. Indeed, ever since I first saw you, I have been thinking how much more rich and elegant you would look if you wore a large diamond, instead of that little, plain, insignificant pearl, that's no bigger than a young pea. You must accept my gift, for if you don't I'll think you don't like me."

"There is but one gift, dear Mrs. Maclaurin, that I covet, and that, what would I not give to attain?"

"What on earth can it be? Tell me."

"Your hand, your precious self, most charming of women." And Lord Alexander Beaulieu bent one knee on the *tabouret*, and took the hand of the lady.

"Ah! now, are you in earnest?"

"Never so much so in my life. I have loved you from the first moment that I beheld your fair face, and have longed to lay myself at your feet. Say, may I hope that . . ."

"Hope! To be sure you may, and why not? There's not the least objection in life; sure, are not you a lord, and a fine good-

looking one into the bargain, and what more could any reasonable woman require?"

"Then you will be mine?"

"Faith, and that I will, as sure as my name is Mol—that is Mary Maclaurin. I have a good ten thousand pounds a-year—don't owe a shilling—have plenty of jewels—and am my own mistress."

"Talk not of money, dearest of women! It is but as dross in my eyes, when compared with you."

"We must not despise it for all that, for I know what good it can do, and how foolish the best of us look without it."

"But when may I hope to call you mine—to be blessed with this dear hand!" and again he pressed her to his breast, but, unfortunately, at that moment, Mrs. Bernard entered the room with the small morocco case in her hand, and, seeing Mrs. Maclaurin in the act of being embraced by Lord Alexander Beaulieu, she suddenly turned away, and retreated from the room.

"Call her back, call her back!" exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin.

"Why should I, dearest of women?" replied Lord Alexander.

"Oh! she will imagine all manner of abominable things—indeed she will, for you know not what sly, designing, artful creatures *dams de company* are."

"She can only imagine the fact, that *I* am in love with you, and that *you* do not quite hate me. There is surely no crime in this."

"Why, perhaps not; if she knew that what she saw was in consequence of your having proposed to me, and my having accepted you. But, until she does know this fact, she must think, and for the matter of that so must every proper woman, that it was very wrong of me to let you kiss me."

To the surprise of her future lord, Mrs. Maclaurin looked as much embarrassed and as shy as if, instead of a coarse and vulgar person, she was a modest and refined one.

"I could not imagine that you were such a prude, my charming friend," observed Lord Alexander.

"Sure you don't call it being a prude to be ashamed out of my life"—and the deep flush of red that covered her cheeks, and mounted to her very forehead, proved more than any words could have done that the innate sentiment of feminine modesty peculiar to her countrywomen of every class had not left the coarse breast of the vulgar Irishwoman—"at being caught with the arms of any

man who is not my husband round my waist, and his lips pressed to my cheek."

"How strange!" exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"What is strange?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin.

"That you, my dear creature, who are neither afraid nor ashamed to venture to public masquerades at the Opera-house, among persons of the most degraded of your sex, and least respectable of mine, should be so shocked and embarrassed at being found by your *dame de compagnie* encircled in my arms."

"It is you that are strange, my lord, not to see the difference. I see no harm in amusing myself as best I can. If genteel company won't make my acquaintance and they ought to be ashamed of themselves for refusing, when I never did anything that could come against my character—sure I must go somewhere for a little pleasure. I didn't know that all the people at the masquerades were no better than they should be; but I *do* know, and have been taught from my cradle, that a decent woman ought not to let any man, except her father or brother, kiss her till she is a wife, and, therefore, you must never attempt to take this liberty till we are married; and I must tell Mrs. Bernard at once that we are engaged. Well, won't it be a great comfort to have a husband, and not require *dams de company!* I thought that they always would be ready to amuse one, to make one laugh when out of spirits, in short, never to let one be dull or gloomy; but this isn't the case at all; and as for opening and shutting the doors and windows, poking the fire, picking up one's handkerchief, and bringing anything from one room to another, a page can do it as well, and, in a beautiful dress, would look much more elegant than any of those old frumps of *dams de company*. How nice it would be for me to have a little black page, with a white turban and diamond ear-rings—wouldn't it?"

"Charming! But you must now think of more serious things. When may I hope to call you mine?"

"Sure, you needn't be in such a hurry."

"Who wouldn't be in a hurry to posses such a treasure as you?"

"Won't you ask the consent of your parents?"

"My father is dead, and my mother, dear, easy creature, will receive with kindness any one I present to her as my wife. My brother's consent I have no occasion to ask, and he will, I am certain, rejoice at my marrying so delightful a person as yourself."

"Is your brother married?"

"No, nor likely to be."

"He is a marquis, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then if he were to die, you would be a marquis?"

"Certainly: and you, my charming friend, what an elegant marchioness you would make!"

"Who knows?—life is uncertain. Here to-day and gone to-morrow. We are cut down like grass, and not all one's gold and diamonds can save one, when once death comes. I thought of all this when I saw poor Mr. Macbaurin in his last hours. There he was, like a flower drooping, and fading, with his red silk nightcap and his pale face. He had thousands and thousands of pounds, yet Death took him off just as easily as if he hadn't a guinea. I sometimes think of all this when I am between asleep and awake, and the poor old wizen countenance of him seems before my eyes."

"You must not dwell on such painful subjects. You really grow quite pathetic, my sweet friend."

"Well, then, ring the bell for Mrs. Bernard."

When that lady entered, Mrs. Macbaurin addressed her as follows:—

"You mustn't think, Mrs. Bernard, that there's anything wrong between my lord and me. We are going to be married, and then I won't want you any more, as his lordship will be plenty of company for me."

Poor Mrs. Bernard curtseyed, but spoke not: and even the selfish Lord Alexander Beaulieu, albeit unused to attend much to the feelings of others, felt a momentary sentiment of pity, as he marked the sudden paleness of her cheek at this unexpected intimation that she was to be thrown out of bread.

"Give me the case I sent you for," said Mrs. Macbaurin; and, opening it, she drew forth a magnificent diamond pin, and handed it to Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "Wear this for my sake, and mind you never part with it. I'd like to have a line or two engraved on it, such as—

'When this you see,
Remember me.'"

Lord Alexander felt embarrassed by the costly gift, and its being made in the presence of Mrs. Bernard did not help to reassure him. Little as he was remarkable for delicacy, some portion of the *fierté* of gentle blood sent a blush to his cheek; and the man, who had not scrupled to take in his friends by wagers, and by selling them bad horses, knowing them to be so—nay, who had, while loathing

the woman before him, plotted and intrigued to wed and possess himself of her fortune without any conscientious self-reproach or shame, felt abashed at receiving this gift.

"Give me a sixpence," said Mrs. Maclaurin, holding out her hand. "You know they say it's unlucky to give or take a present with a point, unless the receiver gives a bit of money in return."

"I must then offer you a Roman coin, for a sixpence it would be difficult to find at Rome," and Lord Alexander drew from his waistcoat-pocket a small silver paul.

"And now," resumed the lady, "that we have settled more weighty concerns, and arranged everything about our marriage, you must tell me in what dress I had best go to the masked ball. I have been thinking that if you will go as the famous Brian Borough, the great Irish king, and I as his queen, it would be very elegant."

"I must positively decline assuming any character. It is considered very vulgar for gentlemen to do so, and, though most anxious to meet your wishes on every point, this is wholly impossible."

Mrs. Maclaurin felt and looked disappointed; but her respect for a lord checked her expressing her annoyance, and she submitted with a tolerably good grace to his decision.

"But you'll go with me to the masquerade, won't you?" said she, putting on what she imagined to be her most gracious and captivating air, but which her affianced husband considered to be her worst, as the assumption of winning smiles in so very plain a face rendered it in his opinion more disagreeable.

"Yes, I will attend you, though I hardly think it prudent in your peculiar position," and Lord Alexander Beaulieu looked grave.

"My peculiar position!" reiterated the lady. "Why what is there peculiar in my position, except my having more money than other widows?"

"You are here a total stranger, wholly unprotected, no female acquaintances, young, and fair."—It was some time ere he could bring himself to add the last word, so sensible was he of the falsehood it contained.—"If seen attended by a young man, a thousand evil reports would be circulated to your disadvantage, which would, when we are married, tend to prevent your reception in that society in which, as my wife, as Lady Alexander Beaulieu, you will have a right to appear. This is the reason why I have denied myself the pleasure of escorting you about at Rome, and

resisted your desire to present some of my friends to you. Once married, you shall be presented to the best society; but, until that happy event takes place, respect for your reputation must preclude me from appearing in public with you."

"Ah! now the murder is out; I understand the whole thing. I was bothered to guess why you were so shy about never going anywhere with me; and, to tell the truth, I suspected it was because I had not a title that you did not like to be seen with me."

"Our marriage will remove every obstacle to your brilliant reception in the highest circles—Majesty itself will smile on you."

"Oh, how elegant! and what a court-dress I'll wear! I'll put on every jewel I have in the world."

"You will, perhaps, give up going to this masquerade?"

"No; but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go as the Queen of Scots, because as a queen, I can wear so many diamonds, and you can be near me without absolutely appearing to belong to me. Isn't this a capital plan?"

Glad to be excused attendance on her, and, well satisfied with the progress he had made towards accomplishing his marriage, Lord Alexander Beaulieu offered no objection to this last scheme, and left Mrs. Macbarin in high spirits at the prospect of soon becoming a lady.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"And hearts—the warm, the fond, the true—
May live to suffer, and to rue
The hour when first suspicion came
To weaken faith and whisper blame,
And fondly wish, but wish in vain,
Lost peace they could once more regain."

Never had the fair Louisa Sydney sought her pillow with so much pain and doubt torturing her heart as on the night of her return from the *bal costumé*. These were new guests in her breast, and this, their first visit, made her more sensible than ever of the power of the little winged god, whose influence hitherto had only brought her happiness. Mrs. Sydney questioned her as to the cause of her altered looks and manners, but when the plea of headache—that

so often-resorted-to apology for heartache—was urged, she did not doubt its truth, and believing that a night's repose would restore her daughter to her usual state of health, she left her to seek it, imprinting a maternal kiss on her brow. For a moment, Louisa was disposed to throw herself on the bosom of her parent, and avow all that was agitating her soul, but pride—that evil passion, which exercises such dominion over its victims—restrained the impulse and sealed her lips, though, when she heard the door close after her mother, and listened to her retreating footsteps, she regretted not having told her the cause of her chagrin.

"What ails my darling Miss Sydney?" said Nurse Murray, for by that appellation was the old and faithful attendant of the young lady called.

"Only a headache, my good Murray. But why will you persist in sitting up for me? You know I can't bear it, for at your age you should be in your bed hours ago."

"There's no use in being in bed, darling, if one can't sleep, and I never can unless I have seen your dear head laid on your pillow. I have prepared a *tait de poule* for you, and have taken care to get a new-laid egg and the freshest milk to make it. As your dear head aches, I will add a spoonful of orange-flower to it, and it will serve to compose you nicely."

"Not to-night, good Murray. I can take nothing to-night."

There was something tremulous in the voice of Louisa, and a sort of impatience in the gesture with which she waved away the proffered cup, that convinced the old nurse that it was not headache alone which produced both these unusual symptoms.

"Surely, Miss Sydney, you will not grieve your poor old Murray by refusing what she has taken such pains to prepare for you?" said the nurse in her most bland and coaxing accents.

"Indeed, Murray, I—I could not swallow"—and here a burst of passionate tears broke the sentence.

"Good heavens! what is—what *can* be the matter, darling of my heart? I never saw you weep so before. O! tell your own poor old Murray what has happened to produce these tears?" and the nurse, moved by the sorrow of her young mistress, began herself to weep.

"Nothing—I shall be better by and by—I am fatigued," and Louisa began undressing, assisted by Murray.

"The time was, darling," said the old woman, "that you had no care, no secret hidden from me, but now—" and the nurse wept afresh.

"It is very absurd, and my mother would censure me for paying the least attention to such an incident, but to-night, at the ball, a figure disguised as a conjurer followed me through the rooms, hovering so near that his whispers, though inaudible to others, could be heard by me, warning me, in the most emphatic, though mysterious terms, to beware of *him* whom I most trusted, for that he sought me but for my wealth, to fill up the breach made in his own by his reckless extravagance and secret indulgence in libertine pursuits. I ought to have lent a deaf ear to this caution—to this vile calumny, for such I am persuaded it is—and I am displeased with myself for allowing it to make the least impression on me."

"Ah! well a-day, darling, none of us know what is best for us. Who can say but that this warning may have been vouchsafed by Providence to give you time to think—to become better acquainted with Mr. Strathern?—for though Heaven forbid that *I* should say a word, or even entertain a doubt of his being, as I hope he is, one of the most worthy gentlemen in the whole world, still a caution, coming from whoever it may, ought never to be slighed."

"Yes, Murray, in some cases, but this is not one of these cases: and coming, too, from some vile slanderer, whose identity is concealed beneath a mask, ought to be not only slighted but spurned; and Mr. Strathern's character stands so deservedly high, that those who know him, and more especially her whom he has chosen to be his wife, should scorn any anonymous slander uttered against him."

All the generosity of Miss Sydney's nature was excited into action by Murray's worldly-minded view of the warning given to her, and her own doubts faded away for the moment in her indignation that another should entertain similar ones. Nurse Murray was too well acquainted with the character of her whom from infancy she had never lost sight of, not to perceive in a moment that she stood on dangerous ground when she was endeavouring to confirm the newly-awakened suspicions of her young lady. She, therefore, adroitly observed, "You are quite right, darling, not to believe anything against Mr. Strathern—and so I was going to add, if you had allowed me to proceed—but one may pause and take time, and look more attentively into the character and conduct of a gentleman on whom one's happiness in this life is to depend, without positively believing anything to his disadvantage. If he be found to come out pure and faultless from such an examination, he deserves to be still more valued, and a service, instead of an injury, is rendered

him by it; but if—and alas! dear young lady, how few, how very few, so come out—why then, surely, one would have reason to be, indeed, thankful for having escaped being wedded to such a man."

"I weighed and examined the character and disposition of Mr. Strathern before I accepted his proffered hand, and having so done, I take shame to myself, Murray, for having for a moment listened to aught against him. It was unworthy of me, and I am almost vexed with you, Murray, for your well-meant but ill-timed pertinacity, in urging me to talk on this subject. What would the noble-minded Mr. Strathern think if he knew I could doubt his worth, because—for Heaven knows what motive, but certainly for no good one—a slanderer, in the security of a mask, has presumed to calumniate him!"

Louisa Sydney's eyes flashed with more than ordinary brilliancy, and her cheeks became suffused with a rosy blush of indignation against herself, and something approaching to anger against the old nurse, on whom none of the changes in her youthful mistress's mood ever passed unnoticed.

"Don't be angry with your poor faithful old nurse," said Murray. "Forgive her for thinking that no gentleman, whatever may be his merit, can be deserving of such a treasure as her own darling. Indeed, I can't help, dear Miss Sydney, thinking so; not that I would for the world disparage Mr. Strathern, whom I think the handsomest and noblest-looking gentleman I ever saw, except your dear and excellent father, but something I once heard came suddenly into my mind when you mentioned the warning at the masquerade, and that obliged me to advise caution—only a *leetle* caution, 'for that *can* do no harm,' said I to myself."

"And what did you hear, Murray?" asked Miss Sydney, the demon Suspicion reviving in her breast, and her cheeks turning pale with emotion.

"Why, indeed, my dear young lady, so little *was* said, that when I have tried to recall the exact words, they seemed to have much less meaning than they struck me to convey when I heard them spoken, for when I did, they made a painful impression on me."

"Tell me the precise words, Murray, and let *me* judge of their signification," said Miss Sydney, with unusual impatience of look and manner.

"I was chatting with Lady Melcombe's own woman, a most re-

spectable person, and she said, 'So, Mrs. Murray, I hear your young lady is engaged to be married to Mr. Strathern?'"

"Can't you come to the point, my good Murray, without repeating all that Lady Melcombe's *femme de chambre* said?" urged Louisa Sydney, somewhat pettishly.

"Well, miss, I answered, 'I make it a point never to speak of family affairs. Marriages are sometimes broken off, Mrs. Bloxham, and therefore it's always wiser not to talk of them until they have taken place.'

"'Very true,' replied Mrs. Bloxham, 'and for the matter of that, Mrs. Murray, there may be *some* marriages'—and she laid great stress on the word some— 'that it would be better never *should* take place. Your ladies did not know Mr. Strathern in England, did they?'

"'*No*,' said I.

"'I *thought not*,' replied she. 'Well, well, least said is soonest mended;' and she shook her head, and looked very gravely, and there ended the conversation."

Louisa Sydney attempted to laugh as the nurse concluded her account of the conversation with Mrs. Bloxham, but the effort was not a successful one, and she felt angry at observing, by the unchanged gravity of the nurse, that *she* thought so.

"And so this was all you heard, my good Murray!"

"Yes, my dear young lady; and perhaps I was wrong to let it take such a hold of my mind; but Mrs. Bloxham looked so wise and deep, so exactly as if she knew *more* than she said, and shook her head in such a way, that I could not help thinking, God forgive me if I was wrong! that there must be something bad to be told, and I was longing to ask her: for when the happiness of my own dear young lady might depend on it, I naturally would have given anything to hear all she knew. But, then, I thought it was better for me to ask no questions, for she might, after all, perhaps, know nothing, and..."

"You were perfectly right, Murray, and acted much more prudently and circumspectly than I have done in listening to even a supposition that anything disadvantageous of Mr. Strathern could be known."

"Surely, Miss Sydney, a little curiosity in a young lady, when it relates to her future husband, is very allowable and natural. Many ladies have been saved from marriages that would have made them wretched, by having listened to the relation of circumstances with

which they were before unacquainted; and had they not encouraged the persons who disclosed such facts, they never would have heard them."

Murray looked so sapient while uttering this long-winded truism, that under other circumstances her young lady would have been tempted to laugh, but, however she tried to make light of the warning given to her at the ball, and the insinuation conveyed by Mrs. Bloxham to Murray, she could not shake off the painful impression made on her mind by both; and Suspicion, that fiend who has poisoned the happiness of so many, still lurked in her breast, banishing from it the peace and happiness that had previously reigned there. She, however, assumed an air of tranquillity she was far from possessing, and, having dismissed the old nurse with a kind good night, was glad to find herself alone, to weep unwitnessed the tears that pride restrained in the presence of her attendant.

Louisa Sydney had been for some time so happy, so inexpressibly content with herself and others, but, above all, she had abandoned her heart so completely to the affection inspired in it by Strathern, that the doubt which had now been instilled into her mind rendered her wretched, by the contrast of her present feelings with those of the preceding hours. What would she not have given to banish from her memory the insidious whisper listened to at the ball, and to be restored to the blissful security previously enjoyed! Was it, could it be possible, that the refined, the noble-minded Strathern, he to whom she had given her whole heart, could be the heartless libertine, the selfish and calculating spendthrift, who sought her fortune to repair his own? Then would come the recollection of those fond looks in which his very soul seemed to beam forth as he gazed on her face, and those tender expressions in which a true passion, free from the hyperbole and exaggeration in which a counterfeited love would seek to deceive, and a conviction of the sincerity of her affianced husband would again enter her breast. But, alas! when once suspicion has found entrance, it is not easily to be wholly dislodged, and again and again would the hateful withering words of the conjurer come back to chase away returning confidence and peace.

It was broad daylight ere Louisa Sydney found a respite from sorrow in repose. "Tired Nature's sweet restorer" at last descended on her tear-stained lids, but, while he wrapped her senses in sweet forgetfulness, her bosom still heaved with struggling

sobs, and her feverish hand and throbbing temples bore evidence of the havoc made by the painful feelings of the last few hours on her delicate frame. When she appeared at the breakfast-table the next morning, her pale cheek, heavy eyes, and languid step, alarmed her parent. In vain were the most delicate breakfast-cakes and chocolate presented to her—she could do no more than taste them to please her anxious mother, for all appetite had deserted her. She resisted the desire of Mrs. Sydney to send for a physician, declaring that she only required quiet and repose to recover from the fatigues of the previous night, alleging that the light, heat, and noise, so far exceeding what she had ever been accustomed to, had overcome her. Mrs. Sydney was too well versed in the mysteries of woman's heart no to suspect that the alteration in her daughter originated in some other cause than those assigned, and that some misunderstanding, some lover's quarrel, had produced the effect she witnessed; and yet Strathern's temper was so mild, so equal, that she could hardly think *he* could be to blame, so she waited with impatience for his usual visit, that she might judge by the meeting of the lovers whether or not any coldness had interrupted the harmony always previously existing between them.

"Mr. Strathern sent this morning to inquire how you had passed the night, dearest," said Mrs. Sydney.

"Did he?" answered Louisa listlessly.

"He was really alarmed and unhappy about you last night. I never before saw him so much put out of his way."

The fair invalid made no comment, and her mother resumed:

"It is easy to see that Mr. Strathern has not been accustomed to live much in the society of delicate women, for, if he had, he would not have been so much alarmed at your slight indisposition."

Mrs. Sydney could not have uttered a more unfortunate remark, for it instantly brought back to the recollection of her daughter the disgusting revelation made by the conjurer at the masquerade relative to certain propensities of her affianced husband, and the colour rose to her cheek, and her eyes for a moment flashed with unusual animation. Now, of all the evils attributed by the conjurer to Strathern, the allusion to libertinism was the one which had most shocked and displeased Miss Sydney; yet, strange to say, it was the one which found the most easy credence in her mind. The often-reiterated assertions of Nurse Murray of the fallibility of mankind had not failed to produce a bad effect on Louisa. Hitherto she had learned to consider Strathern as a man apart, and wholly

superior to the rest of his sex; and, though at times certain misgivings relative to whether he had, as he often declared, never previously loved, or that he might only have said so to please her, had passed through her mind, she, nevertheless, had believed that which she hoped—that on which much of her happiness depended on believing—namely, that he was one of the few exceptions in the sex against which Nurse Murray so frequently pronounced her denunciation, who had never formed disreputable *liaisons*, or made impure associations.

This belief had received a severe shock by the disclosure by the conjurer, and deep was the regret and indignation Miss Sydney experienced at the thought of the possibility that he on whom she bestowed her virgin heart, and whom she had looked on as a superior being, must henceforth be viewed as one of the common herd of men, one of those libertines so often anathematized by her good Murray. There was pain, anger, shame, and humiliation in the notion, and these new emotions, which mingled and struggled for the first time in her breast, rendered her really ill. "If he had been ruined, beggared," thought Louisa, "I could have enriched him with all my wealth, nor have wronged him by a suspicion of his having sought my hand only to acquire it. I could have found in his noble and generous nature a thousand excuses for past prodigality, and I would have gloried in retrieving his fortune; but to find him that most disgusting of all created beings, a libertine, accustomed to associate with the worthless of his own sex, and the base and profligate of mine—oh, no! for this blow I was *not* prepared, and it has been too heavy a one for me. No, as mamma said, 'It is easy to see that he has not been used to live much in the society of delicate women.' These were her very words. Alas! how little could she imagine the recollections they would evoke, the torture they would inflict, by reminding me of what I would fain efface from my memory for ever! Would that I had not gone to that *bal masqué*!—what chagrin should I have escaped had I remained at home! And yet, if, indeed, the conjurer spoke the truth, is it not better that I should know it ere it be too late? But no; it is not, cannot be true that Henry is the hypocrite he represented him—and a most accomplished one he must be to have so carefully concealed from the world the vile pursuits to which he is represented to be addicted. Even Mr. Rhymer, the cynical Mr. Rhymer, who detects every failing and spares none, spoke of him as one of the rare examples in the present day of a young man who

had fallen into none of the follies, and resisted all the temptations, that beset persons of his age and fortune, on first entering into the dangerous vortex of fashionable life. What a comfort it is to recall his words! Would that I could forget those of the conjurer! If Henry *be* guiltless of the sin laid to his charge, how do I wrong him by yielding to the unworthy suspicion engendered by the report of the conjurer! If!—if! there is torture in the doubt! How, then, should I ever be able to bear the certainty of it? Could I but discover that he has been maligned, that the person who poured into my ear the representations that have given me such pain had been instigated by some secret motive to invent the statements, how should I reproach myself for having indulged a doubt, and how look in the face and meet the glance of him I had so wronged? What must he have thought of my altered manner last night?—the indifference, the more than *indifference*, with which I received his anxious attentions when he believed me to be ill. How will he look when he comes to-day? Will not conscience whisper that some discovery has been made, and that my opinion of him is changed? How narrowly will I watch his countenance, and endeavour to ascertain by its expression whether it serves as a mask to conceal vice, or whether it is, as I have hitherto believed it to be, the mirror in which is reflected the noble mind and generous nature I have learned so fondly to appreciate."

"You are thoughtful, dearest," observed Mrs. Sydney, who had, while affecting to read, been anxiously watching the changeful countenance of her daughter, who sat listlessly turning over the leaves of a book, not one line of which had she attempted to peruse.

Louisa awoke from her reverie, then hesitated, and, for a moment, was tempted to reveal to her mother all that was passing in her mind; but the shame of letting her high-minded parent know that she could stoop to suspect her affianced husband on the faith of a masked accuser checked the avowal that hovered on her lips, and, ere she could form an excuse for her abstraction and sadness, Strathern entered the room. Louisa started and changed colour as he approached. She rather allowed him to take her hand than proffered it to him, as had been her wont; and it trembled so much that her lover, alarmed, and looking tenderly in her face, declared his conviction that she was seriously ill. Her heart was melted by the anxiety he betrayed, and the expression of it was so deep and genuine in his countenance that she could not longer maintain the cold reserve she had assumed—a conviction that, whatever might

have been his errors, there was no falsehood in his love for her, stole into her heart as she listened to his fond inquiries, and met his thoughtful eyes fixed on hers with such an expression of unutterable affection; and she abandoned herself to the pleasure of believing herself beloved—as a truant child enjoys a few brief minutes of stolen play, though conscious that punishment may await its indulgence. No, those fond looks could not cover deceit; the deep and soothing tones of that clear and musical voice could not express falsehood; and she would not, she could not, continue to doubt him.

"You know not, dearest Louisa, the pain and anxiety I endured when I left you, ill and suffering, last night," said Strathern, in a whisper. "I thought, too—but it must have been fancy—that you were less kind, less like yourself, than I had ever seen you since you promised to be mine. It struck me that there was a sudden change in your manner to me at the ball, and this idea haunted me all night, and prevented me from closing my eyes. And yet I blamed myself, too, for this suspicion; for I know my Louisa is not capricious, and that, if I had unwittingly offended, she would instantly have told me so. Would you not, dearest?" and he took her hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"I was fatigued, ill, and out of spirits," replied Miss Sydney, evasively.

"Then, if I should again have the misfortune—and I count it a serious one—of seeing you unwell before I have the blessed privilege of watching by your pillow, promise me that you will not let me depart without returning the pressure of my hand, and uttering a few words of kindness and consolation. Promise me this, dearest."

"I promise," answered Louisa, blushing, and faintly smiling. And Strathern was satisfied.

"Of all amusements, a masquerade has always struck me as being one of the least agreeable," observed Mrs. Sydney, who now approached her daughter and her lover, having given them time to explain away any little quarrel that she fancied might have arisen between them on the previous night.

"I quite agree with you," replied Strathern, "and have ever entertained that opinion."

"Then you have been a frequenter of masquerades," said Miss Sydney, her jealous suspicions revived.

"I have occasionally attended them, but can hardly be said to have been a frequenter of such scenes."

"I understand that masque balls are entirely left off in good society in England," observed Louisa, and there was something so peculiar in her manner in making the observation that Strathern looked at her, and noticed that she seemed displeased.

"*Bals masqués* are sometimes given in London," resumed he, "and I erroneously included masquerades under that head. I never was present at a public masquerade, and should have almost as great a dread of entering among such persons as are, I believe, usually to be found in similar places, as a lady would have."

Louisa's spirits revived, and her fair face resumed its usual sweet and gentle expression, as she listened to this proof of the decorum and reserve of her lover, so unlike what might be expected from a libertine, as he had been reported to her to be.

"The lady who personated Mary Queen of Scots last night did not appear to be of our opinion with regard to masquerades," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"What a person she was!" said Strathern, "I really never beheld anything so absurd, or heard such an accent and style of expression. I wonder who the lord she referred to could be? I heard her say to her companion that she expected one. I cannot congratulate him, whoever he may be, on such an acquaintance."

"I pitied the unfortunate woman who was with her, very much," observed Mrs. Sydney; "for she seemed to feel the peculiar awkwardness of her position exceedingly; but the Queen of Diamonds, as she might be called, rather than the Queen of Scots, appeared to be gifted with an imperturbable assurance."

"Was there ever so absurd an exhibition as Fitzwarren and his future countess made?" remarked Strathern; "and the most amusing part of it was that neither of them seemed in the least aware how supremely ridiculous they made themselves."

"But don't you think that Lady Sophia and Mr. Webworth were quite as absurd?" said Mrs. Sydney. "How ludicrous it was when the black was transferred from the dusky arm of Othello to the fair one of the gentle Desdemona, as well as to her white drapery—a little incident which so irritated the gentle lady of the Moor, that I began to think Othello had more to fear from her violence than she had to dread from his, so bitter were the reproofs I heard her bestow on him."

Thus did Mrs. Sydney and Strathern trifle, in the hope of drawing a smile to the beautiful lips of Louisa, but she relaxed not from the gravity into which she had fallen; and as her mother and lover

observed how unavailing were their efforts to amuse her, they too became grave and abstracted. Never had hours previously appeared so long to Strathern in the society of her he loved. He felt that there must be something more than a mere slight indisposition to occasion the painful change so evident in the appearance and manner of Louisa; and, as his belief in her illness faded away, a dread of her being actuated by caprice or ill-humour replaced it. But was it possible that she, whom he had hitherto regarded as faultless, if ever mortal might so be deemed, could thus descend from the pedestal where he almost deified her, to become a mere fallible woman, and thus to trifle with his feelings? Some portion of her own coldness might now be perceptible in him, as, with a more stately air than he had ever previously assumed, he arose to take his leave. Yet still he could not leave the room without one more effort to discover the cause of Miss Sydney's changed manner, and he approached close to the easy chair in which she sat reclined, and whispered, "Louisa, it is in vain you assert that nothing more than fatigue and a slight indisposition has produced the alteration I have witnessed with such chagrin. You have inflicted deep pain on me, and yet refuse to tell me why you are so cold. I have not merited this cruelty on your part, and, even now, though conscious of not having given the least cause of offence to justify the change I find, I once more entreat of you, by the passionate love we have pledged to each other, and by our hopes of happiness, do not let me leave you wounded and grieved as I am."

The earnestness with which he spoke, the gravity of his aspect, and a tremulousness in his voice, greatly affected Louisa. She raised her eyes to his face, and, as they looked into his, the expression of deep tenderness that beamed in them told her, better than words could have done, how fondly she was beloved. She gave him her hand, and whispered an assurance that all was now well, that he was never dearer to her than at that moment, and that what he deemed coldness was, indeed, but the effect of slight indisposition occasioned by fatigue.

Her revived tenderness pleased, but did not quite satisfy him. He felt she was disingenuous, or, if not so, at least liable to the charge of capriciousness; and though he pressed the beautiful little hand confided to him, and sealed the peace thus made with a kiss on it, he was conscious even while doing so of a diminution of that enthusiastic admiration hitherto entertained for the object of his affection, and based on his confidence in her perfect freedom from the

faults of temper, and the caprice imputed to so many of the young and lovely of her sex. Illness could not, or at least should not, produce coldness and reserve in one who must have seen the anxiety and alarm her indisposition had excited in his breast. She had sent him from her, the previous night, filled with chagrin and dread for her safety, to pass a nearly sleepless night; and had allowed him this day to remain for hours by her without repaying him, until the last moment, by one glance of tenderness, by one word of love, for the anxiety he had undergone for the last twelve hours! And this was the idol he had all but worshipped, the creature on whom he was to depend for happiness through life! How insecure would his felicity be, if she was subject to such changes as the one he had witnessed, and without his being able to assign, or even imagine, the slightest cause for it! He left Mrs. Sydney's, his mind filled with these painful reflections, and his countenance revealed to Louisa that he went away dissatisfied.

## CHAPTER XX.

The man with selfishness imbued
Will every generous thought exclude,
And stoop to actions base and mean,
Wherever good to self is seen.
Careless, he deals to others wrong,
And pain and sorrow will prolong
To those who, guiltless e'en in thought,
To injure him have never sought;
Till retribution, soon or late,
O'ertakes him with contempt and hate.

"Well, I declare, I never knew anything so strange and unaccountable in all my days as Lord Alexander's not keeping his appointment with me at the ball!" said Mrs. Maclaurin to her *dame de compagnie*, as they drove home to her hotel from the Palazzo de Belmonté.

Mrs. Bernard made no reply, being wholly at a loss what to say.

"Why don't you speak, instead of sitting there like a stock or a stone?" resumed Mrs. Maclaurin, angrily. "Don't you think it strange?"

"Yes, ma'am, it certainly does seem so; but perhaps his lordship had some other engagement, from which he could not get free."

"I should like to know what other engagement could be of half such importance to him as one with me, and so I'll tell him to-morrow, I can assure you, when I see him, for I have no notion of putting up with such behaviour, even though *he* is a lord, and I know the harystocracy think themselves privileged to do just what they please to those who have not titles."

"I don't think, madam, that any nobleman or gentleman would presume to treat a lady with disrespect," observed Mrs. Bernard, seeing that she was expected to reply, and not knowing what would be the answer least likely to offend.

"But *I* think that there *are* noblemen and gentlemen who would and who do presume to treat ladies with disrespect. Isn't Lord Alexander Bouloo's conduct this evening a plain proof?"

Luckily for the alarmed Mrs. Bernard, the carriage at this moment stopped at Mrs. Maclaurin's hotel, and spared her the severe reproof which that lady was ready to utter, it being her invariable custom, when anything went wrong, not only to elicit the opinion of her companion, but absolutely to compel the timid and nervous woman to give it, and then to quarrel with that opinion, however cautiously worded.

"Inquire of the porter whether Lord Alexander is yet come home?" said Mrs. Maclaurin.

"Don't you think, madam, that my doing so would have a strange appearance?"

"Fiddlesticks!—stuff and nonsense!—who cares? Ask immediately."

The porter, being questioned, reported that his lordship had returned early in the evening to dress, but was taken so unwell, that he was forced to go to bed and send for a doctor.

"O, my! did I ever hear of anything so sudden! I told you that his lordship must be ill, dangerously ill, to break his engagement with me," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, turning angrily to her *dame de compagnie*; "but you, like a stupid, ill-natured creature as you are, was more inclined to misjudge than to excuse him. You never had the sense or humanity to guess that he might be unwell. But it's just like you—quite of a piece.

This last unjust tack was more than Mrs. Bernard could bear; it

was the drop that made her cup of sorrow overflow, and tears chased each other down her pale cheeks.

"What, crying? 'Pon my word, *you are* too provoking, and really wear out my patience. You can't bear being spoken to without beginning to blubber directly. Ring the bell, and order some supper and wine for me, that I may try and recover the fatigue I have gone through; and let me have no more tears, for they only put me in a passion."

When Mrs. Maclaurin had partaken, with an appetite that by no means denoted any anxiety or chagrin for the illness of her admirer, of the copious supper served to her, and had drank more wine than ladies are generally in the habit of taking, she retired to her chamber, where Justine, her *femme de chambre*, was waiting to undress her.

"Oh, Justin!" said she, "I have passed such a disagreeable evening. I never will go to a masked ball again as the Queen of Scots as long as I live, for I was bothered to death with people asking me all manner of questions about people I never heard of before, and which I could not answer; and now I come home and find that poor, dear Lord Alexander Bouloo has been taken dangerously ill."

"Ah! madame, it is vere true. I did hear of it from von of de *garçons* of de hotel. It is von great pity, for milor is a *charmant garçon.*"

"Why, how is this, Justin? It was only the other day that you couldn't find a word to say in his lordship's favour."

"I not know milor so vell den, madame. I see him more often since, ven you send for me to come to de *salon* ven he vas dere. I never saw such a handsome gentleman, so *comme il faut*, so *distingué*; and his *valet de chambre*, a person *très-bien élevé*, who has come to offer his arm to me for de promenade, has told me that milor is a perfect angel, so *aimable*, so generous, so good, and kind. He did say to me, *en confiance*, dat all de grand ladies are in lofe vid his master, and do vant to marry him; but milor is so difficult to be pleased, he not take any of dem."

Mrs. Maclaurin listened with delight to Justine who, having that day been put in possession of the bond from Lord Alexander, was determined warmly to espouse his interests, in order that he might the more speedily be in a state to pay it. She had sought an interview with Lord Alexander as soon as her mistress had left the hotel for the *bal costumé*, and had got him to affix his signature

to the bond, which was witnessed by two friends of hers invited especially for the purpose. Lord Alexander had seized the occasion of presenting her with the most valuable ring in his possession, the gift of a dowager duchess in England, to whom his flattery and attention had been successfully directed, until, when on the point of reaping their reward, she, unluckily for him, discovered that her jointure, though a large one, would be inadequate to discharge his debts, and so broke off the intended marriage. This gift conciliated the good-will of Justine, who quickly observing how little disposed Lord Alexander was to meet or escort her mistress at the ball, suggested the plea of illness as an excuse for his absenting himself, and advised a bribe to the porter to secure his services in reporting the illness of his lordship when Mrs. Maclaurin should return to the hotel. Justine observed with pleasure that she could not have chosen a surer means of rendering herself agreeable to her mistress than by lavishing her commendations on her suitor; and so skilfully did she point out his many perfections, and, above all, quote the sayings of his valet respecting the alteration lately so visible in his master, that Mrs. Maclaurin's complacency was restored, and she became all smiles.

"And so his servant thinks that his lordship is at last in love, Justin?"

"Yes, madame, oh! terrible in lofe. He says milor vill sit for hours looking up at de *plafond*—de vat you call ceiling, and den he sighs and sighs just like a broken bellows ven it is blown; and he cannot eat any ting, and he does not sleep."

"Poor man! Really, Justin, I am quite sorry, pon my word I am. And now that you tell me, I remember I was struck by the badness of his appetite, for he has always done his dinner before I have half got through mine, and he never eats a morsel of Sally Lunn, muffin, or crumpet at tea, which is unsociable, as I have to eat by myself, Mrs. Bernard also always refusing to eat at tea."

"Ah! madame is *trop bonne*, too *aimable*, for dat voman. She is bad-tempered *créature*—does not lofe madame—*une ingrate*, and does not like milor because she see he lofes madame so much."

"But how do you know this, Justin?"

"Know, madame! I see it vid my too leetle eyes. I look in her face, and I see all dat is in her heart."

"But really, Justin, I can't say *I* think her ill-tempered, for

when I scold her, and I do so very often for nothing at all, when I am vexed about something else, she never shows bad humour."

"But doesn't she cry, madame? Ah! and de big tears do run down her face, and dat is all because she be so vex, so angry, and dare not show it to madame."

"Well, she shan't remain long with me, I can tell her."

"I hope not, madame, and ven a lady have got von lofing husband he is de best companion, and she not vant a *dame de compagnie*."

"I trust Lord Alexander Bouloo's illness will not be of serious nature, or last long."

"Ah! dat will depend on madame."

"How, Justin, on me? I am not a doctor to cure him."

"But madame can cure him better dan all de doctors, for as she made him ill by putting de lofe into his heart, he vill not be vell till madame put his poor heart out of pain, and marry him."

"Don't you think that it would be too soon, Justin? I have not known him long enough yet."

"And if poor milor should die of lofe, vich I tink he vill, den madame vill never know him no better."

"But he never told me he was so desperately in love as all this comes to, Justin."

"De true lofe, madame, nevere is told moche, and especially de lofe of milors, for dey be *fier*, have de pride, and not like to have de pity, ven de lofe is vat dey do vant. I only hope you vill not be de cause dat milor vill die, for dat vould be terrible, and it vill happen if madame vill not vere soon marry him, and be miladi. How vell dat sound! How better dan Misteress Maclaurin! Vat ugly name! — Miladi Alexander Beaulieu, vat grand sound! Ah! madame vill be happy voman to have a handsome husband and so *elégant*, so *distingué*, to give her de arm and go vid her every where."

"Heigh-ho, Justin! There is a great deal of truth in what you say; but, after all, it is such a pleasant thing to have one's liberty —to have no one to consult about any thing—to go *where* one likes and *when* one likes — and to have no one to interfere with one's money but one's self."

"Ah! bah! madame; vat is dat compared to have such a handsome and noble husband; and to be a miladi, vid de power to wear a coronet of diamonds on your head, and not to be called Misteress Maclaurin—*fi, donc*, vat ugly name!"

"Well, Justin, I suppose I *must* make up my mind to marry soon. Heigh-ho! I'll be mighty glad when it's all over."

Mrs. Maclaurin had by this time entered her bed, the progress of her undressing having been intentionally protracted by her wily *femme de chambre,* in order that she might induce her to abridge the courtship of her suitor, and let the marriage ceremony take place with as little delay as possible—a measure which she felt persuaded would be most agreeable to Lord Alexander Beaulieu, whose interest she, in consideration of the bond, had now fully espoused.

"You may take that satin dress I wore yesterday, Justin, with the black lace on it. It's a lovely dress, and cost me a fortune; but I don't think it suits my complexion. Now you may light the night-lamp, and put it behind the screen. That will do, Justin; call me at eleven o'clock. Good night."

"*Mon Dieu! quelle bête, quelle bête!*" said Justine to herself, as she left the chamber of her mistress, turning up her eyes as if to invoke the stars to witness the truth of her exclamation. "*Pauvre homme! pauvre mais méprisable homme!*" and so saying, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders and a toss of the head, she sought her pillow, to dream of the gold she was to receive when the ill-assorted nuptials of her mistress and Lord Alexander Beaulieu should take place.

The desire for vengeance which had ever since his rejection rankled in the heart of Lord Alexander Beaulieu against Miss Sydney and her mother only wanted an occasion to be carried into effect, and this occasion he thought he had now found in the *bal masqué* to be given at the Palazzo. He therefore determined to disguise himself as a conjurer, and watch an opportunity of distilling into the ear of the lovely girl, unobserved by her lover, the calumny supplied by his fertile invention. Through the medium of his servant, an adept in intrigue and mischief, he had acquired an accurate description of the dresses to be worn by Mrs. and Miss Sydney, so that he was able to recognise them easily in the crowd, and his own disguise was so complete that he felt perfectly safe from detection. He put something in his mouth that his accent should not betray him, and, thus armed for mischief, he sought the fair and guileless object on whom his malice was to be wreaked.

Nor was he long in discovering her. Her graceful and exquisitely-shaped form might easily be distinguished among the crowd of less beautiful ones that floated by, and never had its rare per-

fection struck him more forcibly than at that time, when her lovely face being concealed by the black mask which shrouded it, the attention was not drawn off to the visage, but became fixed by the snowy throat and delicately-moulded bust, the finely-turned shoulders, and slender waist, and the dignified movements which might have revealed her to eyes even less interested in the discovery than those of Lord Alexander Beaulieu. Yet the charms on which he gazed produced no softening effect on his hardened feelings. On the contrary, they irritated, they maddened him. When he looked from this lovely creature, on whom all eyes were fixed, and to whom all gazers accorded the meed of admiration, to the vulgar and ridiculous figure of the coarse woman he meant to wed, his anger knew no bounds, and he breathed nothing but vengeance against her who had rejected him. When he heard the sarcasms and ridicule Mrs. Maclaurin's dress and appearance excited—she, from the profusion of her jewels, being a most conspicuous object—he became still more incensed. He was almost tempted to whisper some disagreeable truths in her ear, truths that might possibly, if uttered, produce the salutary effect of precluding her ever after from exhibiting herself in such gorgeous attire, but his jealousy of Strathern, and desire of inflicting pain on Miss Sydney, turned all his thoughts on this one point. He long hovered near her, watching an opportunity to address her, but so wholly was Strathern occupied with her, that he dared not speak.

At length, while a group of masks surrounded them, and his rival was replying to their *plaisanteries*, Lord Alexander glided close to Miss Sydney, and, unperceived, poured into her ear the well-woven tissue of calumnies he had invented for the occasion. He marked with fiend-like delight the sudden start and involuntary shudder of the fair girl, as she listened to his monstrous falsehoods, and, well divining that the dread of producing a quarrel would operate to prevent her revealing to her lover what had just been told her, he hovered near to gloat his eyes on the chagrin he had occasioned, the symptoms of which but too soon manifested themselves, in the silence and abstraction of the lovely Louisa for the rest of the evening.

"My plot works well," thought this base man, "and will, I hope, be the cause of an irreparable breach between this haughty girl and her proud suitor. I have sown the seeds of mischief in a fertile soil, for where suspicion and pride dwell, *there* will angry feelings find an easy entrance, and peace will be difficult to be

restored, notwithstanding all their love for each other. I have studied her profoundly, and know her better than Strathern does, with all the opportunities he has had for becoming acquainted with her failings. He, poor dolt, sees only the beauty that has enslaved, and the talents that have captivated him; but I marked the pride, the ungovernable pride, which is a leading characteristic in her nature, and the suspicion, which, whether an acquired or natural defect, lies dormant in her mind, like gunpowder, awaiting only the spark to ignite it into a flame. Of all men, Strathern is the last to submit to the insult of being suspected, because, conscious of not meriting it, his pride would quickly take alarm and resent it, even at the expense of his affection. Yes, I have laid a train that I trust will lead to a grand explosion, and thus have I avenged the insolence of the spoiled heiress. I only wish I could have my revenge on her mother, but she is so cold, so passionless, that I know not where to assail her. But have I not already found the only vulnerable part? Is not her happiness—nay, her very life—bound up in that of her daughter, and in wounding, probably destroying, her repose, have I not inflicted the deepest wound on her mother's? My heart feels lighter now that I have half accomplished the vengeance I have so long panted for, and I will away to my hotel, certain of sleeping better for it."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was too wily not to have thought of all the precautions necessary to be taken to prevent the possibility of his being identified with the conjurer. He had procured two tickets for the *bal costumé*, and had given one to a casual acquaintance of humble fortune, on condition that he should not make use of it until a certain hour, and that he was to attend in the dress of a conjurer, precisely similar to his own, which dress he provided. Another condition was annexed, which was, that he was not to unmask for the night. This person was of a similar height, and somewhat resembled him in his air; and, punctual to his engagement, as Lord Alexander Beaulieu left the Palazzo, his *double* entered it, and amused himself in wandering through the rooms, and addressing the usual predictions of good and evil to those around him. Often had the eye of the dejected and pained Louisa Sydney turned on the conjurer during the remainder of the evening, little imagining that it was no longer he whose whisper had so disturbed her tranquillity that she looked on, while her persecutor, satisfied with the mischief he had made, and glorying in the thought of the pain he had inflicted, betook himself to his hotel, and,

feigning indisposition, sent for an English medical practitioner established at Rome, whose propensity to gossiping was so well known, that those who consulted him were sure to have the fact of their having done so quickly circulated all round the Eternal City, and more especially if they wished their illness to be kept a secret.

"God bless me, my lord, how long have you been ailing?" said Doctor Gillingsworth, as he entered, out of breath from the rapidity with which he ascended the stairs.

"I felt unwell in the morning, but was so anxious to accompany some friends to the *bal costumé* at the Palazzo Belmonté to-night, that I would not send for you, fearing you might prohibit my going there."

"Very wrong, my lord, very wrong indeed! Your lordship should have instantly had medical advice. You know the old saying, 'a stitch in time saves nine.' A very sensible though an old adage, my lord. But I beg pardon, pray, proceed—your lordship was stating that you postponed calling in a physician."

"Yes, I hoped I should get better, but by the hour it was time to dress for the ball, by Jove, I felt so very ill that I was obliged to go to bed!"

"You should have sent for me then—*indeed* you should. An hour, nay, half an hour, is often very important in cases of illness, but 'better late than never,' as the old proverb has it. Let me feel your pulse," and the doctor drew forth a gold watch of unusual dimensions, to which a large gold chain and seals were attached, and seizing the wrist of his patient with one hand, while with the other he held up his watch to his eyes, and looking with suitable gravity, he counted the pulsations of the said wrist. "Pulse quick, very quick—feverish action. Let me see your lordship's tongue."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was disposed to laugh as he exhibited it.

"Bad tongue, my lord, very red. Certain symptom of inflammatory action going on. Have you experienced much thirst?"

"Considerable," and the pretended *malade* was again tempted to smile as he remembered that the thirst to which he alluded was habitual to him after dinner, when any remarkably good wine tempted him.

"Ay, I thought so; quick pulse and thirst generally go together. Any pain?"

"Yes, in my head, attended with a certain swimming and giddiness."

"Yes, my lord, all that your lordship tells me confirms my first impression, that your lordship has caught the fever at present so prevalent at Rome. But do not be alarmed, my lord. I have been very successful in my treatment of it—have had great experience, and I doubt not in a short time—a few weeks, or, perhaps, even before—that I shall be able to restore your lordship to your usual state of health."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who never felt better in his life, was amused by the gravity with which Dr. Gillingsworth pronounced him to be in a fever, and enjoyed the comic scene, in which he was enacting a *rôle*.

"I should like very much to have a few ounces of blood taken from your lordship. I find depletion in such cases greatly facilitates the cure."

"You must excuse me, doctor, but I have a peculiar objection to being bled."

"In that case, my lord, I would not, on any account, insist on such a measure. I will, instead, administer a few draughts—one to be taken every hour until you feel relieved. Shall I write the prescription here, my lord, or call myself at the pharmacian's to order it to be made up?"

"I will not give you so much trouble. My servant will send the prescription to the apothecary's."

Doctor Gillingsworth sat down, wrote the prescription, and approaching the bed, held out his hand in a manner peculiar to some of his profession, but whether for the purpose of shaking hands with his patient, or of averting any exertion on his part, we cannot take upon ourselves to declare. All we know is, that when Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who was prepared for the occasion, slipped a golden coin into his hand, it closed spasmodically, and a bland smile stole over his face.

"You will, perhaps, be so good as not to mention my illness, doctor? It may be, it is a weakness, but I don't like to have it known that I am confined to my room."

"You may trust me, my lord. I am secret as the grave. I always remember the old adage, 'Least said is soonest mended.' Not a syllable shall transpire. To-morrow, I shall be with you by ten o'clock. Hope to find you better. Would come sooner, but have so many visits to make. Can hardly get through half my calls in a day. No one here in my profession who can be trusted. Overworked, my lord, but cannot be helped. Good night; mind you

are particular in taking a draught every hour. I am your lordship's most obedient."

"What a humbug!" was the first phrase that escaped the lips of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he sat up in his bed, and indulged in a hearty laugh, after the departure of Doctor Gillingsworth. "My pulse," resumed he, "is as regular as it is possible to be, and yet he pronounced me to be in a fever. Mind, Durnford, that you throw the draughts out of the window when they come, but in the meanwhile send off the prescription to the next apothecary's, and let the porter know how very ill I am."

"Yes, my lord."

"This is a *coup de maître*," said Lord Alexander to himself, as he lay thinking over the scene that had just taken place. "This gossiping quack will not fail to let all Rome know to-morrow that I am dangerously ill. My prohibition will only serve to excite him to giving my malady greater publicity. This will effect a double object. First, it will remove all suspicion, should any enter the mind of Miss Sydney, that I could be the person who, in the guise of a conjurer, had addressed her; and, secondly, it will excuse my breach of promise to my abominable Dulcinea, the widow, in not having joined her at the ball as I promised. Oh, ye Gods, what a creature she is! and what an exhibition she made of herself this night! I could have beaten her with pleasure as I listened to the *bêtises* she uttered, and looked at the absurd figure she made of herself. Never did the stupid dog who has been prescribing for me order so bitter a pill to be gulped down as this matrimonial one! To what terrible straits does poverty compel a man! I must not think of it, or, by Jove! I shall have, in reality, the fever Gillingsworth erroneously believes me to have. Durnford, give me that novel, and now you may go; I'll read myself to sleep."

In a quarter of an hour after, whether from the somniferous qualities of the novel, in the contents of which a false and cynical philosophy vied with grossness and immorality—a style of reading in which Lord Alexander Beaulieu peculiarly delighted—he fell as fast asleep as if his conscience could not reproach him with a single crime, or that he had not that very night sent to a sleepless pillow a young and innocent being who had never injured him in aught. But conscience had long ceased to exercise any influence over Lord Alexander Beaulieu—nay, even her reproaches were no longer heard. He lived but for the gratification of his own selfish pleasures, and he would not have hesitated to compromise the hap-

piness of all with whom he came in contact to secure the means of furnishing the enjoyments for which he thirsted. Nor let my readers suppose that this is an unnatural character. There are persons innumerable to be met in society with similar defects, the result of an early initiation into the artificial and corrupting world, the governing power of which is an inordinate and all-engrossing selfishness, to which feeling, rectitude, and honour, are but too often sacrificed or made subordinate.

When Lord Alexander Beaulieu awoke the next morning, the first sensation he experienced was a pleasurable one, as he recollected the poison he had instilled into the ear of Miss Sydney the previous night. He pictured her to himself pale and harassed, after a sleepless night, a prey to doubt and fear, combated by affection that would fain put to flight such new and unbidden guests from her gentle breast. "I have assailed her in her most vulnerable part," thought he, as he gloated on the picture of her misery which his fancy had formed, "and well do I know how, in spite of her attachment to Strathern, she will torture her heart, by conjuring up a thousand 'trifles, light as air,' to confirm the suspicion I have awakened. She is, if I have judged her rightly, too proud, too sensitive, to confide the cause of her chagrin to her lover, or even to her mother—and here is my stronghold on her—for such a confidence would inevitably lead to an explanation that would destroy all my scheme of vengeance. Truth is potent when it speaks to ears willing to receive it, and the assurances of his innocence would not be made in vain by Strathern, or asserted by Mrs. Sydney. There is an open frankness in the mother that would make her at once repel with indignation any charge anonymously made against a friend; and she would, with all the intuitive quickness peculiar to her, divine the motive of the revelation made to her daughter, and probably guess at the person who had made it. This would be disagreeable, although I have, dreading the possibility of such an event, taken the precaution of having Doctor Gillingsworth ready to prove an *alibi*. Well, it is some consolation to a spirit like mine that if I cannot possess this lovely girl myself, I can prevent her bestowing her hand on another."

These reflections were interrupted by a visit from Doctor Gillingsworth, who, on tiptoes, entered the chamber.

"Better, I hope, my lord? Had a little sleep, I trust?"

"Much better, doctor."

"Was sure you would be. My mode of treatment seldom fails.

Felt relieved soon after you took your medicine, I venture to say. Let me feel your pulse. Much less quick—fever nearly subdued—greatly improved. Must keep quiet, nevertheless, for a few days, lest you might have a return of the fever. Relapses are always to be dreaded. I must keep you on the starving system for a little while; barley-water, with a little sugarcandy in it, but no lemon-peel—mind, no lemon-peel. I'll just write a prescription:" and the sapient doctor sat down, and indited sundry lines in Latin resembling hieroglyphics. "Your lordship will take one of the draughts I have ordered every four hours, and this evening I will look in on you again."

Doctor Gillingsworth approached so near the bed with the prescription in his hand that Lord Alexander Beaulieu might have glided his fee into it had he been prepared with it; but Durnford, observing the manœuvre of the M D., quickly seized the requisite sum from a table, which he slipped into the palm of his master, who tranferred it into that of his physician.

"Now that I see your countenance more distinctly, my lord, I am not quite so satisfied as I was. There is a heaviness about the eyes that proves all is not yet right. I have a great deal to do to-day, a very great deal—so many patients ill, and many of them living at such a distance; nevertheless, I will come to you again at half-past three o'clock to see the effect of these draughts. Yes, I will then be quite sure that you are going on well;" and, bowing lowly to his patient, Dr. Gillingsworth departed, leaving Lord Alexander to indulge in a fit of laughter at his medical skill.

"Order me some dry toast and chocolate, Durnford, for I'm as hungry as a hunter; and answer all inquiries about my health by saying that my doctor finds me a little better this morning."

## CHAPITRE XXI.

Time was when Cupid mortals sway'd,
And tender hearts his laws obeyed,
Blithely he led each willing pair
To Hymen's altar, but compare
Our modern days, when Plutus rules
Mankind, the sole exception—fools.

There are few positions more humiliating and mortifying to a woman than that of finding her affianced husband become every day more cold and indifferent towards her, and less disposed to seek her society. A high-spirited woman, possessed of even the least delicacy, would quickly release her betrothed from his engagement the moment she had made such a discovery. But Lady Olivia Wellerby was not a person at all likely to take this step; for, though fully aware of the indifference which he had too little tact to conceal, and hating him for it, she was by no means disposed to resign her right over him, and consequently affected not to perceive that which was obvious to all, but which she had sense enough to be convinced no remonstrance of hers could remedy. Husbands with rank and fortune she knew were most difficult to be caught, for she had too long and unsuccessfully tried her talent in ensnaring, not to have gained a vast deal of experience on this point. To bring a man to a downright proposal of marriage was, she felt, so arduous a task, that she was little disposed to try her chance again, and, therefore, pertinaciously adhered to an engagement, the fulfilment of which, it was but too plain, was looked forward to with perfect indifference by her future husband. But, though fully conscious of her exact position with Lord Fitzwarren, it was gall and wormwood to her to see that others also were aware of it. Her vanity, and she had an inordinate share of it—perhaps because her craving desire for its gratification had never been indulged—writhed under the daily, hourly observations and taunts of Lady Sophia, who, with a most unsisterly ill-nature, aggravated the annoyance she felt, and avenged her own mortification at the superior good fortune of Lady Olivia in having at length secured a husband. Never were they alone that Lady Sophia did not renew her bitter remarks on the

apparent indifference of her sister's betrothed, and declare that were she so treated she would spurn him.

"I have heard of husbands growing cold and neglectful soon *after* marriage," said Lady Sophia, the day after the *bal costumé*, "but it was reserved for Lord Fitzwarren to show that he was tired of his *fiancée*. One comfort you will have, and that is, he cannot become more indifferent when you are his wife than he is now. You really have wonderful patience, Olivia, and I admire, though I confess I could not imitate it."

"I wish you had an opportunity afforded you of trying," replied Lady Olivia; "but I fear, Sophy, you have no such good luck."

"Call you it good luck to marry a fool—and a fool, too, who cares not for you, and has not even the grace to keep up appearances!"

"I call it good luck to have secured a husband with high rank, old family, large estates, and tolerable good looks; and only wish I could congratulate you on a similar good fortune."

"Heaven forbid I should ever wed a man who was as indifferent towards me as Lord Fitzwarren is towards you! I would prefer any fate to that."

"Yet I *have* heard you say you cared not for love, provided you could obtain rank and fortune by marriage."

"I used to think so, before I saw the humiliating position in which you, Olivia, are placed; but, since then, I have entirely changed my opinion, and rather than be pointed at by the world as a mean-spirited creature, who kept a man to his engagement when he no longer wished to fulfil it, I would remain single all my life."

"No, you would not, Sophy. I know you better, and am well aware that you would give any thing or every thing at this moment to be in my place; and bad as your temper is, you would stifle every ebullition of it rather than risk breaking with your betrothed."

"Me!"

"Yes, you. Don't think that you can deceive me, Sophy, by your declarations and taunts. I am aware of all that passes in your heart, and pity the feelings which prompt you to be so malicious."

"And I pity you, Olivia, who are compelled to conceal your anger at the neglect you experience at the hands of your future husband, lest the exhibition of it should furnish him with an excuse of breaking his engagement altogether."

"Reserve your pity for yourself, for you will need it when you find yourself condemned to solitude in the country with papa and

mamma, a daily witness of their matrimonial squabbles, with no chance of seeing a single man fit to be looked at, while I shall be in the enjoyment of every advantage which the station of Lord Fitzwarren can command, part of which advantages you might have partaken by being my guest, had not your envy and jealousy induced you to annoy and wound me."

While this quarrel was taking place between the sisters, Lord and Lady Wellerby were engaged in one of those conjugal *tête-à-tête* which neither ever sought unless compelled to do so by some hard necessity. Both had lost at cards the two last evenings, his lordship to the tune of some hundreds, at the rooms of some of his *soi-disant* friends, and her ladyship at the card-tables of hers. The tempers of husband and wife were consequently unusually irritable and both, conscious of this, felt a secret dread of an explosion, which neither possessed sufficient self-control to prevent.

"You sent to say you wanted to speak to me," said Lord Wellerby, with portentous brow and a stern glance.

"Yes, my dear lord; I wished to explain to you why I am obliged, yes, positively compelled, to apply to you again for some money."

"And I must tell you that I cannot let you have any; and, what is more, madam, if I could I would not. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Lady Wellerby, at your age, to be so thoughtless and improvident as to be everlastingly craving money from me!"

"At my age, Lord Wellerby! You really surprise me. You know that I am many years your junior. But I suppose this is the reason why you think I should be treated as a girl, and be compelled to ask for money, instead of having a liberal supply at my disposal, as every other woman of my rank has."

"Your rank, indeed! And, pray, who gave you that rank, I should like to know?"

"My own birth and station—and, without vanity, I might add my personal attractions—entitled me to a much higher rank than yours, Lord Wellerby; and had I not foolishly preferred you, I might have....."

"Remained an old maid all your life, as your sister did."

"Me remain an old maid! Really, my lord, you forget what is due to yourself and to me when you use such language."

"So you always say, Lady Wellerby, whenever you force me to tell you a little wholesome truth. But recrimination is useless, so we had better avoid it. You want money, and I am determined

not to give you any. I have already advanced you more than half your next year's pin-money, and if anything should occur, I should be a loser."

"What should occur, Lord Wellerby? Am I likely to elope?"

"Not at all; and for the very best reason in the world—you could find no one to elope with you. Old women are safe in this respect."

"Old women! It is too absurd to hear you talk such nonsense, and I wonder you are not ashamed to utter it."

"Do you mean to deny that you are an old woman, Lady Wellerby?"

"No one but you, my lord, would ever assert that I was old; but your unkindness prompts you to say everything that is cruel;" and here the lady had recourse to her handkerchief to wipe away the tears of anger and mortification which were chasing each other down her flushed cheeks. Her lord was, however, too well accustomed to her tears to be at all moved by them, and, fully conscious of this, she was angry with herself for giving way to them.

"I have often warned you against card-playing," said Lord Wellerby, "and told you what the consequence would be. Women, with their weak heads, have no business to be risking their money. Whist is a game that requires *some* intellect, and I have never yet seen any one of your sex who had enough to play a steady rubber. With men it is different: most of us can play tolerably well, and some, like myself, really understand it scientifically."

"Then why do you lose so frequently? You think, because I do not speak on the subject, that I am ignorant how deeply you play, and how often you lose large sums, while you reproach me for losing comparatively small ones."

"I lose *my own* money, Lady Wellerby; but you lose *mine*, and this makes a considerable difference in the affair. I before told you that I have already advanced you above half your next year's pin-money, and if anything should happen it would be lost to me."

"But what *can* happen, Lord Wellerby?" said the lady, still sobbing, and applying her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Why, you may die. We are all mortal, you know."

"Good Heavens! can you be so barbarous as to calculate on my death? Was there ever anything so shocking!"

"A sensible man calculates on the chances of every event before he embarks his money on a venture."

"Then I'll tell you what, Lord Wellerby, you will be disappointed in your calculations, for I am determined to take more care of my

health than ever, if only to defeat your hopes; and, as you are many years my senior, the chances are that I shall long outlive you."

"Don't be too sure of that, my lady. I'm a tough old fellow, I can tell you, and you begin to break very visibly. Every one remarks it, and people are always asking me what is your complaint."

"And do you suppose that no one speaks to *me* about *your* altered looks? Why, it was only last night that Lady Melcombe observed how infirm and old you had grown, and advised me to consult Doctor Gillingsworth for you."

"She'd be devilish glad to be half as well and hearty as I am! A poor, sickly, nervous old fool, who wants to force people to fancy themselves ill, in order to gain fees for her toadying doctor, who brings her all the gossip of Rome every morning."

"Heaven knows, Lord Wellerby, that your health has ever been to me a subject of the greatest, the tenderest interest!"

"I can readily believe it, and for a very good reason. You know that at my death my property goes out of the family, and that you will find yourself reduced to live on your jointure in a very different style to that in which you have lived with me. One of the advantages of our English customs is, that wives, in nine cases out of ten, lose so much instead of profiting by the deaths of their husbands, that, however they may dislike them, they are compelled to desire their longevity, rather than see themselves turned adrift from the homes where they have been accustomed to dwell in ease and comfort."

"I am a stranger to such unwomanly and selfish feelings and motives, Lord Wellerby."

"So every one of your sex would say."

"Hear me this once, my dear lord, and I promise you, on my word of honour, that I will not again ask you for any money for a year. Let me have a hundred pounds, and you will make me most grateful. I have really the most urgent occasion for it, or I would not press you."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Lady Wellerby, and it is merely to oblige you that I make the offer. I'll give you the hundred pounds, on condition that you give up your pin-money for a year to come."

"By which you will save one hundred and fifty pounds. Why, really a Jew would not make such hard conditions as this. Give up two hundred and fifty pounds to receive one down!"

"You have my ultimatum; accept or refuse it as you think best, but no other terms will I offer you," and Lord Wellerby motioned to leave the room.

His lady-wife passed in review all the difficulties of her actual position. Indebted to two or three of her female friends, to the amount of eighty-five pounds, she knew that if they were not paid, her reception henceforth in their society would be anything but agreeable. Nevertheless, to leave herself penniless for a year to come was a hard measure. While she reflected, Lord Wellerby took up his hat and cane, and walked to the door; but, ere he had passed its threshold, she called to him not to go, and with an ill grace consented to his conditions. A cheque on the banker at Rome for the hundred pounds was drawn and delivered to the lady, and her husband, again reminding her of their bargain, sallied forth to meet some of his friends, and to play a few rubbers, after reading the English newspapers, according to his usual routine.

"Well, Livy, I'm off to-morrow," said Lord Fitzwarren to his betrothed, after the morning salutation on entering the *salon*. "By Jove, I can no longer stand Rome! I offered to frank Axy Beaulieu to Naples and Sicily, and—would you believe it?—he has refused. There must be something in the wind to make him, who is so fond of saving his money—and who, poor devil! has so little to spare—reject such an offer. You have, I suppose, heard that he has been very ill. That fellow Gillingsworth has been doctoring him some days."

"And so you really go to-morrow, dear George? Heighho! How sadly I shall miss you! But I cannot be so selfish as to wish you to stay at a place where you are bored."

"Which proves that you are a good-natured as well as a sensible girl, Livy. The time will pass quickly over, for I have remarked that, however dull and tiresome a place may be, time *does* pass, and this is something. I will be back from Sicily to meet you at Naples, where we are to take each other 'for better or worse.' The settlement will be sent out there by my solicitor, and that, signed and sealed, there need be no delay."

"You will write to me often, dear George, won't you?"

"I am the worst correspondent in the world, Livy. Why, would you believe it, that even to my stud-groom I can seldom bring myself to write!—and you know that for a man on the turf it is of the utmost importance that he should continually write his instructions to his stud-groom. No; I fear you will find me a devilish

bad correspondent. Do you know, Livy, that I have been thinking of a very good plan to save you and me trouble when we are asunder. It is for my valet to marry your *femme de chambre*, and they can write to each other and mention all our whereabouts, and what we are doing, and so prevent the necessity of our writing. Don't you think it a capital scheme?"

"Excellent," replied Lady Olivia, affecting to smile, though her vanity was deeply wounded by this inconiestable proof of her future husband's indifference.

"The fact is, I hate trouble in any shape, and writing *is* a positive trouble; but I will send you a few lines now and then, and Webworth, whom I take with me, can write a regular account of our movements if you wish it."

"Oh, yes, dear George! I should like it of all things. It will be such a consolation to me to know exactly where you are, and what you are doing."

"Why, to say the truth, Livy, I don't expect to be much amused in Sicily, where I hear there is little to see except a pack of ruins, and I have had quite enough of them here. But anything is better than Rome."

"What an incorrigible brute!" thought Lady Olivia, but she took especial care not to give utterance to this thought, and smiled most graciously, an effort which cost her no slight exertion of self-command.

"I must bid the old folk good bye, and shake hands with Sophy."

"Shan't we see you in the evening, dear George!"

"I fear not, for I have engaged half-a-dozen fellows to dine with me, and we are going to have a regular smoking-match, and I won't be able to get away."

"They'll think it so strange, if you don't come in the evening to take leave, if only for half-an-hour."

"Who'll think it strange?"

"Papa and mamma and Sophia."

"Whew! and who the deuce cares what they think? Not I, for one. You and I understand each other, Livy, don't we? And this it is that reconciles me to matrimony. 'Livy is a devilish clever, sensible girl,' says I to myself, when I am alone, 'and as a man *must* marry one time or another, I may as well wed now as hereafter. She won't bother or trouble me, for I've let her see exactly what sort of a fellow I am, and if she likes to put up with my ways,

why, that's her affair." This is what I say to myself, whenever I think of our engagement, and this it is that makes me not regret it so much as I should otherwise do."

"Yes, dear George, you and I *do* understand each other, and I should be wretched at the mere thought of putting you out of your way."

"You are a good girl, Livy; and now, if you really wish to study my wishes in my absence, all you have to do is to read the Racing Calendar, and learn to know something about horses, and then we shall get on much better together, for we'll have always a subject to talk about. This is the reason I never get bored with men, for they can talk of what most interests me, which is so pleasant. Promise me, Livy, that you'll study the Racing Calendar. I have one which I brought out with me; indeed I never travel without one, and I will leave it with you."

"Thanks, dear George, how very kind of you! You may be assured I shall study it every day, and surprise you when we meet by my proficiency. I wish you had lent me the book before."

"We shall get on very well, Livy, when we get to England. *There* I am never bored, and you will be delighted with my horses. I'll take you down to Newmarket with me to the meetings. Several men of my acquaintance always take their wives there."

"I shall be delighted to go with you, and to see your stables and favourite horses."

"And what would you say to having a betting-book of your own, Livy, and staking some of your pin-money in backing my nags? I'll put you up to all the secrets. I'm a knowing hand, I can tell you, and between us we may make lots of money."

"I'll be entirely directed by you, dear George, and hope I shan't prove a stupid scholar. How I should have liked to have seen your poor Fanny! I often think what a perfect animal she must have been.

"She *was*, Livy, perfect, as you'll say when you see her picture, a capital likeness, for which I paid a hundred guineas. No, I never can take any thing as I liked Fanny, and never can hope to find her equal while I live. I have her portrait in my bed-room, at home, and never look at it without being made melancholy. But time flies, and I must be off. Suppose you go and see for the old folk, that I may wish them good-bye, and Sophy, too; I should like to shake hands with Sophy."

"Sophia has really been behaving so unkindly to me of late that

I hardly can wish you to show much civility to her. She is always endeavouring to persuade me that you, dear George, don't love me, and...."

"Poor soul! don't mind that, Livy. It's all jealousy. Sophy is naturally enough desperately cut up, because I preferred you to her. She can't help it, poor girl, and therefore she shows her temper. Indeed, for the matter of that, there is not, I dare be sworn, a girl in all Rome that doesn't owe you a grudge, Livy, for catching me, and who would not, if she had an opportunity, try to torment you just as Sophy does. 'Tis their nature, poor things, and they can't help it. So you must not be angry with poor Sophy."

Lady Olivia was more struck by the egregious vanity than by the good-nature of her betrothed husband, and as she went in pursuit of her mother and sister she muttered to herself, "I deserve to be canonized as a saint for the patience with which I submit to this brute; but let me once be his wife, and I will answer for it that Lady Fitzwarren will amply avenge the slights offered to Lady Olivia Wellerby."

Lady Wellerby and Lady Sophia entered the *salon*—the first somewhat alarmed at the intelligence of the approaching departure of her future son-in-law, who she feared might escape from his engagement, and the second rather pleased than otherwise that Lord Fitzwarren was going, from the belief that it would be disagreeable to her sister.

"I am much surprised to hear that you are going to leave us dear Lord Fitzwarren," said Lady Wellerby.

"When you know me better you will never be surprised at anything I do, for I am a strange fellow, and so sudden in my resolves that Livy must always hold herself in readiness for a move. And you, Sophy, are you, too, surprised that I am setting off?"

"Not in the least. Nothing that you can do will ever surprise me."

"I don't know whether you mean that as a compliment or not, Sophy; but I will take it as one, for I hate to be taken for a tame, jog-trot sort of animal, that settles days beforehand what he intends to do, or where he means to go. The comfort of a good fortune is the power of setting off when and where the fancy takes one to go. I never made up my mind two days—no, by Jove! nor one day—beforehand what I meant to do. Why, the very day I proposed for Livy here I had no more notion of it than of flying, and if any one had told me I would, I'd have betted him five to three I would not."

Lady Sophia cast a glance at her sister as this foolish speech was uttered, and there was so much malice in the expression of her countenance, that Lady Olivia could have inflicted any punishment, however severe, on her future lord, for thus furnishing her sister with fresh weapons to wound her, being well aware that his avowal would often be quoted by her as proof of his perfect indifference.

"Olivia will greatly feel your absence," observed Lady Wellerby, "and therefore I could have wished you not to leave Rome."

"Livy is too sensible a girl to make a fool of herself, because I go to amuse myself," replied the obtuse Lord Fitzwarren, "and the sooner she accustoms herself to my ways the better. I shall be in one place in one day, and at another the next. London, Newmarket, the Highlands of Scotland, Doncaster, and Heaven only knows where. I may, or may not, take her with me, and she must let it depend wholly on my humour. If I take her, she must rough it, that's all. Be ready to start at a moment's warning, and travel all night. Never think of putting a bandbox, or other woman's gear, into my carriage. Mind you, I never will insist on her going any where with me unless she likes it, for that wouldn't be fair, but if she *will* go, and I dare say she will always be wishing to do so, why, she must, as I before said be ready at a moment's notice. You see, Lady Wellerby, I am free and above-board. I put out all my seams to be seen beforehand, and if they are found to be disagreeable to rub against, there's always time to cry off."

"No danger that Olivia will cry off, is there, sister?" said Lady Sophia, with a sneer. "But what woman would wish to break an engagement with you?"

"'Pon my soul, Sophy, you are a devilish clever and good-natured girl, after all," observed Lord Fitzvarren, unconscious that the Lady Sophia was mocking him, "and it won't be my fault if I don't get you a good husband when we go back to England. Well, good bye, my lady:" and he shook hands with his future mother-in-law. "Remember me to the old governor. Farewell, Sophy;" and he kissed the lady's cheek; "and God bless you, my dear Livy;" and he pressed his affianced wife to his breast.

"Come, no tears, Livy," for she had put her handkerchief to her eyes. "We'll meet soon, at Naples. Good-bye:" and off darted Lord Fitzwarren, no more touched by his parting with the lady of

his love, than if he had only bade farewell to any of his male acquaintances. He even hummed a tune as he descended the stairs, and never looked up at the window where Lady Olivia had sentimentally placed herself to watch his receding steps.

"You need not look after him, Olivia," said Lady Sophia. "Such a delicate attention is quite thrown away on one who seems rather to rejoice at than lament his separation from you."

"'Pon my word, Olivia, I am somewhat uneasy. He is such a very extraordinary sort of man;" and Lady Wellerby looked alarmed.

"You are doubtless afraid he will pine and fret during his absence from Olivia," remarked her ill-natured sister.

"Leave off uttering such sarcasms, Sophia," said her mother. "Olivia, I dare say, knows what she is about, and if *she* is not uneasy, we have no right to be so. Lord Fitzwarren is, it must be confessed, a little original, but no one is perfect. He has many fine qualities, I dare say."

"Yet we have never hitherto discovered any one of them," remarked Lady Sophia.

"I beg leave to differ from you, Sophia. What could be more amiable than his proposing for your sister? How few young men of his rank and wealth in the present day would have acted with such generosity! Never named a word about her having any fortune; and nobly, and without being solicited, declared his intention of settling a large jointure on her. If such conduct does not prove his possessing noble qualities, I know not what could"

"More especially, as you must be convinced, mamma, even by his own avowal, made here in our presence, that his proposing for Olivia was quite a chance, wholly unpremeditated an hour before."

"Nevertheless, Sophia," said Lady Olivia, with as much calmness of manner and dignity as she could assume, "I feel the most perfect confidence in Lord Fitzwarren; and, as I am satisfied, and know that he and I quite understand each other, I am in no way to be troubled by the ill-natured remarks which only prove how glad she who makes them would be to stand in my place. I assure you, mother, that you have not the remotest cause for uneasiness about the stability of purpose of Fitzwarren, who, though perhaps not so demonstrative in his mode of evincing his affection as other men might be, is no less sincere and well meaning."

"You delight me, dear Olivia, indeed you do. You are so rational —so very right."

And thus ended the conference.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Oh, Love! whose smiling advent ever cheers,
Why art thou followed soon by doubts and fears?
Waking the heart to griefs before unknown,
'Till at thy mandate hope and peace have flown.
'Tis thine to cheat us with delusive art,
Blandly to soothe and captivate the heart;
And when it yields to thy despotic sway,
And reason's dictates can no more obey,
Letting wild passion rule the troubled breast,
Thou smil'st to see thy sov'reign pow'r confest.
Yet oh! without thee who could bear to live,
Since thou alone to life a charm can'st give!

When Mrs. Sydney found herself alone with her daughter, after the departure of Strathern, she thought it her duty to remonstrate with her on the visible change in her manner towards her betrothed husband.

"Take heed, my dearest Louisa," said the anxious mother, "how you trifle with your own happiness and that of another. Your manner towards Mr. Strathern is so wholly changed, that I cannot think such an alteration could occur, unless you had great reason to be dissatisfied with him; for I would not willingly believe you to be capricious, and yet, so highly do I estimate him, that I should be almost as reluctant to think that he has done aught to merit this change."

Louisa paused, and for a moment, as on the preceding night, felt disposed to avow to her mother all that was passing in her mind; but, unhappily, a dread of appearing weak and credulous in the eyes of her parent, by confessing herself to be influenced against the chosen of her heart, by the whispers of an unknown slanderer, sealed her lips, and she endeavoured to avert her mother's comments by alleging that indisposition alone had produced the alteration noticed. Unwilling to increase her visible dejection, Mrs. Sydney forebore to urge the subject any further, but she experienced a deep pang at the consciousness of her child's want of confidence in her, in thus concealing whatever real or imaginary cause had operated to produce her coldness to Mr. Strathern.

There are few positions more trying to the heart of a fond and

devoted mother than of finding herself treated with want of confidence by a daughter, for whose happiness she would readily make any or every sacrifice. So delicate and refined were Mrs. Sydney's feelings that she was keenly alive to this proof of what she deemed unkindness, and as she dwelt in thought on the boundless affection she had ever lavished on her daughter, she felt the truth of the lines of our divine bard—

> "Oh! how much sharper than a serpent's tooth
> It is to have a thankless child!"

To this daughter she had devoted every thought and every hope of her life since ruthless death had snatched from her the other dear objects who shared her affection. She had loved *them* in her sole surviving child, and as she traced resemblances to the beloved departed in her, it seemed as if all the tenderness once shared by them was now concentrated in this last tie that bound her to existence. No sacrifice was ever deemed to be such for this adored daughter. For her, during her childhood, had she isolated herself from friends and acquaintances, that she might, free from interruption, devote the whole of her time to this treasured object; for her had she resigned herself to the heavy trials with which it had pleased divine Providence to afflict her, and learned to indulge hope once more that her past griefs would be repaid by witnessing and contributing to the happiness of this beloved one. But now, when that happiness was within reach, she saw her child ready to dash down the fair fabric which *she* had beheld rise with such thankfulness and satisfaction, and though feeling as deep an interest in the affair as Louisa Sydney herself, she was denied the knowledge of the cause of the change in her daughter's sentiments, and, consequently, could take no step to remove false impressions, or to soften true ones.

And was this disingenuousness and cold reserve what a fond mother had a right to expect from an only and almost idolized child? Mrs. Sydney felt that it was not, and tears of wounded and disappointed affection betrayed how keenly alive she was to the wrong. Had these tears been shed in the presence of Louisa, it is more than probable that the sight of them would have brought her to her mother's arms, there to confess all that was passing in her own heart, for what daughter could withstand a mother's tears, and more especially when conscious they were occasioned by anxiety for her happiness? Unfortunately for both, Mrs. Sydney had sought the privacy of her own chamber, there to weep over her disap-

pointment, and Louisa remained in ignorance of the pain which her reserve had inflicted. Yet some compunctious feelings did arise in her breast when, in two hours after, she beheld the more than ordinary paleness of her mother's cheek, and the traces of tears in her eyes, and she inquired, with unaffected interest, whether she had not been unwell. This inquiry seemed almost like an insult, or, at least, indicated such a total want of sympathy with the emotions that filled her heart, that it produced no other effect on Mrs. Sydney than an assertion that she was not ill. How often does an ill-timed reserve check the overflowings of affection, and prevent explanations which might lead to a restoration of confidence and happiness between persons dear to each other!

When Strathern returned to his apartment, he found some letters on his table, and listlessly breaking the seals, an anonymous one among the number met his eye. His first impulse was to throw it in the fire without perusal, but the name of Miss Sydney attracted his attention, and he read on. Had Louisa and he been on the same confidential and happy terms which had existed between them previously to the masked ball, he would not have condescended to peruse an anonymous letter, having, like all honourable-minded persons, an utter contempt for such productions and their writers: but the unaccountable change in her manner excited so much anxiety in his breast that a vague notion of finding some clue to the discovery of it in this letter induced him to overcome his disgust to it, and to read on to the end. The contents were as follows, and in a disguised hand:—

"One who esteems you, and knows your good qualities, thinks it a pity that you should become the dupe of a cold-hearted and capricious coquette, who, whatever you may suppose to the contrary, entertains no real sentiment of attachment towards you. So little capable is Miss Sydney of appreciating your character or of valuing your affection, that she, with the suspicion which forms so strong a charasteristic in her nature, believes you actuated by mercenary motives in seeking her hand, nor can your large and unencumbered fortune preserve you from these unjust and insulting surmises in her mind. What happiness can a man with your frank disposition and generous feelings expect in a union with one so wholly opposed to you? be warned ere it be too late, and take advantage of the first occasion furnished you by her capricious temper—and such will not be wanting—to break off an engage-

ment, the fulfilment of which can only tend to make you wretched through life."

Strathern threw the letter from him with anger and disdain. That a creature like his Louisa should be accused of cold-heartedness and caprice appeared to him as the most signal act of injustice, and he pronounced that such a charge could only originate in envy or jealousy; and yet, while he thus reasoned, the recollection of her late unaccountable change of manner towards him occurred to his mind, and lent a sting to the accusations contained in the anonymous letter, which, without this consciousness on his part, they never could have possessed. He felt angry with himself for remembering aught that served to give a colour to the charges in the epistle, yet could not chase the remembrance of her altered manner from his mind.

"Capricious she certainly must be," thought Strathern, as he mused over his last interview with Miss Sydney. "I had said or done nothing that could produce the slightest displeasure, and nevertheless there is no disguising the fact from myself that her conduct to-day evinced coldness and indifference, if not absolute dissatisfaction. Then she is accused of being suspicious. I should hate a suspicious woman." But the notion of hate coupled with Louisa Sydney was one that could not long find a place in his thoughts, and he repelled it with a "Psha!" and an angry shake of the head. Yet the notion of her being suspicious, once entered into his mind, could not so easily be dismissed, and again and again it presented itself to him. "There is no defect," thought he, "that I could not sooner pardon than a suspicious nature; it indicates such a want of generosity, such an absence of that confiding tenderness which forms the sweetest, as well as the surest and most indissoluble, bond of love. And to suspect *me* of mercenary motives!—*me*, who never yet harboured a sentiment that approached a mercenary feeling. It is insulting—it is monstrous; and if, *indeed*, Louisa Sydney can entertain such unworthy, such base doubts, she must be far from deserving the fond, the deep attachment I have entertained for her. But, no—I will not, I *cannot* believe her capable of indulging such injurious thoughts of me. Have I not poured out every sentiment, every feeling of my heart to her, that heart which never loved before she awakened all its dormant tenderness? Have I concealed a single thought from her, or glossed over an error? And then to be so misunderstood, so misjudged, and suspected of

being actuated by mercenary motives. Oh! it is too bad, too humiliating, and wounds me to the very soul."

Long did Strathern, the proud and sensitive Strathern, give way to bitter reflections like these—one moment casting from him all belief that the object of his affection *could* wrong him by suspicions, and the next relapsing into anger as the possibility of her doing so presented itself to him.

It is a strange but, nevertheless, a striking fact, frequently noticed by accurate observers of human nature, that persons are least disposed to pardon in others the faults peculiar to themselves. Whether this proceeds from ignorance of their own besetting sins, or from a profound knowledge and consequently a hatred of them, has never yet been satisfactorily ascertained; but however this may be, Strathern felt that he could have more readily looked over any defect in his betrothed wife than that of being suspicious, and yet this precise fault was perhaps the most prominent, if not the sole one in his own character. Had *he* not entertained an inherent dread of being preferred not for himself, but for his fortune, and had not this very fear led him to rejoice that the circumstance of Miss Sydney being an heiress precluded all doubts on the subject! Yet *she* must not entertain similar feelings, without being laid open to the most severe censure, censure far exceeding the fault of which she stood accused—a fault which was, in all human probability, more to be attributed to the peculiarity of her position as an heiress than to her natural disposition. Never had Strathern passed two more disagreeable hours than while engaged in these painful reflections. The averted looks, abstracted air, and silence of Louisa Sydney during their last interview, were recalled to memory, and the writer of the anonymous letter—who, as probably our readers have already divined, was no other than Lord Alexander Beaulieu—would have rejoiced in the success of his malicious scheme for interrupting the good understanding of the lovers, could he have witnessed the gloom and unhappiness of both.

"To suspect me, who so adored and worshipped her!" would Strathern exclaim again and again, as he dwelt on the contents of the letter he had received; "would that I could tear her image from my heart! But no, there it reigns despotically, and even now, while writhing under the sense of her injustice, I feel that I can never cease to love her. If I could but see and converse with her mother alone! Mrs. Sydney has always been most kind and indulgent to me, and would on this occasion reveal to me the cause

of Louisa's changed manner. And has it, indeed, come to this! Am I, while conscious of having furnished no cause for offence, to sue for pardon, to humble myself before this imperious beauty, and to entreat her mother to tell me why she is so changed? Fool that I was, to abandon my whole soul, my every hope of happiness, to the keeping of one who could so wrong me as she has done! But I will conquer this unmanly weakness? I will show her that I am not to be spurned, and my feelings trifled with, for no earthly cause, and I will..."

But here a return of tenderness made the angry lover break off ere he finished the sentence, and pause, for he could not even in thought bring himself to contemplate the possibility of a serious quarrel with her he so fondly loved. Then would come the remembrance of her beauty and winning softness, of those hours of sweet communion and interchange of thought, of their plans for the future, and of her undisguised tenderness; and his love seemed almost increased by the tempest of angry passion that had lately threatened to shake if not to destroy it. He seized the anonymous letter, and, with a movement of wrath, and an imprecation on the head of the writer, he flung it into the fire, and, as he saw it consume, he exclaimed:—

"Thus perish every doubt of the affection and goodness of my lovely and beloved Louisa. Surely some demon must have prompted the writer of that vile scroll to infuse such horrid thoughts into my mind. How could I ever look into the beautiful eyes of my betrothed, could she but dream that I had allowed a base slanderer, shielded under the covert of a mask that screens him from my just vengeance, to shake, even for a moment, my faith in her! She would despise me, and I almost despise myself for such unpardonable weakness."

With what pleasure does a fond heart dash from it the first doubts that have intruded against a cherished object, and how strong is the gush of renewed tenderness that replaces angry emotions! There was an almost womanly softness in the feelings of Strathern, now that his previous anger had melted away; and, proud as he naturally was, he could have humbled himself, ay, have knelt before Louisa Sydney, were she present, to crave pardon for having even in thought done her such injustice as to doubt her tenderness or worth. He would not allow himself to think of her late coldness or estrangement; or, if it would intrude on his mind, he attributed it to the cause she herself had assigned—indisposition; and he

blamed himself for ever having imagined it could have proceeded from aught else.

While these reflections occupied the mind of Strathern, that of the object of his affection was even more painfully filled.

"How weak and vacillating am I grown!" thought Louisa Sydney, as she reclined in her easy-chair, her head resting on her fair hand, and her eyes cast down. "He has disproved none of the charges made against him, not a single one; and yet, such is his influence over my heart, that no sooner did he urge me with those looks of affection so dear to me, and those tones that are as music to my ear, than I forgot every suspicion, every accusation, and remembered only that *he* was near me, and that I loved! But, could he have met my glance with the earnest gaze of tenderness that returned it, if he loved me not as fondly, as passionately, as he professes? Could his voice have sounded so like truth, and carried such conviction to my heart, if it expressed not the deep, the real tenderness of his? Oh, no! I will not believe that he could so dissemble, so conceal the gross propensities of which he has been accused, as to look and speak the very soul of honour and truth. I will again abandon myself to the happy confidence in his attachment and noble qualities, which have formed the basis of my affection for him, and banish every doubt.

"But *if*—oh! that odious word—if there should be any truth in the warning poured into my ear by the conjurer! Is it my fond and foolish heart that blinds me, and makes me believe only that which I wish to believe, and renders me the dupe of a—a libertine? Faugh! what a sensation of faintness and disgust steals over me at the thought! Rather would I for ever tear his image from my breast, although in doing so life itself might pay the forfeit, than endure to think that he, on whom I had bestowed my virgin heart, had worn out all the freshness and purity of his in those sensual *liaisons* which unfit a man from being the delicate-minded and honourable companion, as well as the sure guide, of a young and fond wife. Of all mercenary motives I acquit him. Though rich, I am not"—and she glanced with complacency at the mirror near her—"so devoid of personal attractions as to fear that my fortune alone has won him to seek my hand. No, were he steeped in poverty to its very dregs, I would bestow on him the whole of my wealth. Alas! what woman ever gave her heart, that greatest of all her treasures, if it be indeed a true and noble one, who would not follow up the gift by that which is so much less valuable—in *her*

estimation, at least—her fortune? What could that woman—that Mrs. Bloxham I think Murray called her—mean by her Burleigh-like shakes of the head and grave looks when she spoke of him? It is evident that her manner made a deep impression on Murray, and she is not wont to attach much importance to trifles. I wish I had asked to see this Mrs. Bloxham—how I hate the vulgar name! —in order to discover what she really knows. But am I indeed fallen so low as to employ one menial to pry into the secrets of another, and relatively, too, to my affianced husband? How would my mother shrink from the bare notion that her daughter should so demean herself! No, I could not descend to that; and yet..... But I will drive it from my thoughts; I will prohibit Murray from ever again reverting to the subject; and I will still the beating of this throbbing heart, meet Strathern with smiles, while it is tortured by doubts and fears; I will do all but break my engagement with him, for that, fond, weak, and infatuated as I am, I feel I have no longer the strength to effect.

"And I, who used to be proud, who believed myself incapable of loving one, however attractive he might be, whom I deemed less elevated in soul, less faultless in conduct, than the standard, the fair ideal I had formed of him who was to be my husband—I can now contemplate the possibility of dragging on the chain of affection, with its links lacerating my soul, from the suspicion of the unworthiness of him I love, rather than at once rend them asunder, lest the doing so might for ever ruin my peace. The most tormenting images are continually presenting themselves to my heated mind ever since I heard him on whom I dote accused of being a libertine. I seem to behold him in the society of some of those women lost alike to virtue and to shame, smiling at the coarse jest, listening to their ribald conversation, or—oh! worse than that —addressing to one of them those looks, or low, sweet accents, that have so often charmed me. And this was he whom I fondly believed had never loved before he gave his heart to me. But why profane the name of love by supposing that he could have felt such a passion for one whose acquaintance he must blush to acknowledge? No; a man like Strathern could not entertain a preference for one whom he could not esteem or respect; yet, nevertheless, an acquaintance with such persons must have left an indelible stain on his mind, and rendered it unfit to appreciate or repay the devoted attachment of a virtuous and pure-hearted woman.

"How have I turned with horror and disgust from some of my

female acquaintances, who had consented to marry men known to have led dissolute lives, and how have I refused assent to the gross and indelicate axiom sometimes pronounced by the coarse-minded, that "reformed rakes make the best husbands!" I dreamt not then that I should ever find myself reduced to contemplate a union with one accused of libertinism, yet here I am forced to admit the possibility of such a measure, or to break off for ever from the first, the only attachment of my life. Which ever step I take, I see nothing before me but misery. Would to Heaven that I had never heard the insidious whispers of the conjurer, or that, having heard them, I had sufficient courage either to break off my engagement, or to submit, as others of my sex have done, to what is probably the inevitable fate of many—that of wedding a man the recollection of whose previous mode of life must often inflict a pang, and embitter a happiness that might, without this painful remembrance, be indeed perfect! I wonder whether my mother ever experienced any o the bitter emotions that have tortured me during the last night and day. She I know loved, and fondly too, my poor father. Theirs was a marriage of affection; and hers is a sensitive mind, that would have shrank from confiding her destiny to one whose principles and morals were not unexceptionable. How I should like to hear her opinion on this point, if I could do so without her suspecting how deep an interest I take in it—if such a subject could be introduced, and a case like mine hypothetically put to her! Perhaps this may yet be accomplished, and I may be strengthened and consoled by hearing her sentiments."

The soliloquy of the fair and sensitive Louisa Sydney was interrupted by the arrival of Strathern, who came, as he was wont, to spend the evening with his betrothed and her mother. The painful reflection in which both the lovers had indulged during the last day and night had rendered them more than ever aware of the depth and extent of their affection, and proved to them that it is not in the halcyon hours of love that the influence of that all-engrossing and despotic passion most strongly makes itself felt, but in those trials when doubt, and fear, and jealousy, wring the breast, and the tortured heart owns that its peace and happiness depend wholly on another. There was a gravity mingled in the tenderness with which Strathern addressed the object of his affection; and she was pensive, though no longer cold or *distrait*. Her face was still pale, but, as her lover marked its softened expression, he thought he had never beheld her look more beautiful. His anxiety about her health, re-

vealed by innumerable nameless attentions, the glance of deep interest continually fixed on her countenance, and the subdued tone of his voice when he spoke to her, soothed and reassured her doubts; and she allowed herself to relapse into all the confidence and tenderness established between her lover and herself, previously to the evening of the *bal costumé*. Mrs. Sydney, too, in witnessing the restored good understanding between her daughter and Strathern, recovered her usual equanimity, although an impression was left on her mind that Louisa had evinced caprice or injustice towards her affianced husband, and that *he* had been much hurt by it.

Never had Louisa Sydney been more amiable than on this evening. The consciousness that Strathern had been wronged, for his presence and unembarrassed manner had wrought that conviction, and that she owed him an atonement, induced her to vanquish the languor and latent feeling of indisposition which still lingered in her frame; and her lover, too deeply interested in her health not to regard with anxious solicitude every symptom that indicated the least derangement of it, felt grateful to her for her exertion to be cheerful, as he marked her changeful cheek and languid smile. He inwardly blamed himself for having attributed to coldness or caprice the change in her manner that had previously given him such pain, but which, he now thought quite clear, had originated in illness, and, in proportion to this conviction, became his self-reproach and anxiety about her. This tender anxiety, revealed in his every glance and word, chased from the mind of Louisa Sydney all the suspicions and consequent fears infused into it by the conjurer. As she sat by his side, and listened to the fond words which he addressed to her in accents which told the deep love that dictated them, she wondered how she ever could have allowed herself to doubt his truth; and she experienced a sense of humiliation at the reflection that the whispers of a masked slanderer could have even for a moment so warped her judgment. No reproaches from another could have produced so salutary an effect on Louisa Sydney as those awakened in her own heart by the tenderness of Strathern. This very tenderness betrayed such a consciousness on his part of not meriting unkindness, that her natural generosity was excited, and she could, had they then been alone, have confessed her weakness to him, and acknowledged, with deep contrition, the injustice she had done him.

It has been said that the reconciliation of lovers is the renewal

of love, and the adage may hold good in some cases. These peculiar ones are, where no harsh words, no angry glances, or unkind observations have passed, when nothing is left to rankle in the memory, nothing to be pardoned by the heart. But when these have occurred, let lovers beware of confiding too much in the efficacy of reconciliations, and carefully eschew all disagreements, as they invariably leave behind a sense of soreness, which, like the painful sensations generally experienced after bodily wounds, even when they appear healed, continue to annoy long after.

This, however, was a happy evening, and the lovers felt it to be so. Nevertheless, both wished that they had not experienced the possibility of being dissatisfied with each other, for their happiness no longer seemed based on so certain a foundation as before, although this experience led to the mutal determination of never again permitting themselves to misinterpret each other. Strathern tore himself from his lovely Louisa at an earlier hour than usual, that she might seek her pillow; and, as he took the small, white hand which he more than ever longed to call his own at the altar, it no longer refused to return his pressure.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Oh, wisely has it been decreed
That wicked schemers ever need
Some ready tool to lend his aid,
Whose services with gold are paid:
The plotter, while he basely stoops
To use corruption, thinks he dupes
His tool, who in his turn can see
His master is as vile as he,
And will, however large his pay,
His first corruptor sure betray;
Proving such sinful leagues were meant
To bring their own stern punishment.

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was consoled for being, by Doctor Gillingsworth's positive commands, kept a prisoner to his chamber for three days by the release it afforded him from the society of Mrs. Maclaurin, who evinced the utmost anxiety relative to his health, and despatched to him the most tender inquiries every two or three hours.

"I see that I may dictate my own terms to this dreadful woman," thought Lord Alexander, glancing complacently at his own image, reflected in an opposite mirror. "Really she seems determined to compromise herself completely by this exhibition of her tenderness, yet I feel that I hate her still more for her excessive attachment to me. But it is ever so? I never cared for any woman who loved me much. Heighho! If that fool Fitzwarren had not left Rome, I might be amused by his bringing me the news of the day. Gillingsworth is such an egregious egotist. He talks only of the maladies of his patients, in order that he may introduce proofs of his own skill in treating them; and Durnford, in general so adroit in collecting and retailing the gossip of every place where he is, I cannot spare to go out in search of intelligence. It is lucky that this same Durnford is so devoted to me, for he is a sad rascal; and his quickness of perception in seizing a scheme of mischief, and his ability in carrying it into execution, give such evidence of his talent and rascality, that I am sometimes alarmed lest he should one day or other betray the secrets of which he has got possession. Clever servants are indispensable, but dangerous tools to work with. They must be trusted to a certain degree, or they are sure to blunder; but the plague of it is, they get so sharp-sighted that they discover all that one wants concealed; nay, not only that, but sometimes jump at conclusions far beyond what is really intended. 'Talk of the devil,' as the saying is, for here comes my hopeful valet."

"I have told the cook your lordship's wishes, and your lordship may depend on having an excellent dinner to-day. I have seen the wine put in ice."

"I have been thinking, Durnford, about my plan of your marrying Mademoiselle Justine, the *femme de chambre* of Mrs. Maclaurin."

"I have always had an objection to matrimony, my lord—a very great objection—but if it was made worth my while, and that your lordship had really set your mind on it, I would try to conquer my scruples."

"Why, you unconscionable dog, Mademoiselle Justine is not only a pretty, but a rich woman, and where could you get a more suitable wife, I should like to know?"

"Mademoiselle is, I dare say, all that your lordship has said, but she is clever my lord—too clever for my fancy. If ever I should marry, I sould like to find a more simple and quiet young woman. No good ever comes, my lord, of having too clever a wife. They

are not to be hoodwinked or deceived; and if, like Mademoiselle Justine, they are up to mischief, a man can never match 'em."

"So you are not disposed to marry this French woman?"

"Not unless it was made worth my while, my lord."

"What do you call made worth your while?"

"A couple of thousand pounds given to me as a marriage portion, my lord."

"Ha! ha! ha! Really, Durnford, you are a most unconscionable fellow. No, my good friend, I have not so completely set my heart on seeing you become the husband of Justine, as to bestow a dowry on you to effect it."

"Just as your lordship pleases; but when a man is asked to give up his liberty, I think it is not unreasonable to expect some compensation for such a sacrifice."

"But, as I before told you, Mademoiselle Justine is, or *will be* rich, richer than you could have expected."

"If so, my lord, it would be rather galling to my pride that all the money should be at her side. It would hurt my feelings to find myself wholly dependant on my wife."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu felt the *coup de patte* aimed at him, by his impertinent servant, and writhed under it, but he endeavoured to conceal his consciousness of it as well as he could, though, had he seen the glance of Durnford, who wished to be certain whether or not his cut had taken effect, he could hardly have mastered his indignation. The valet smiled as he marked the flushed cheek of his master, but he took care ere he did so to avert his face. Lord Alexander Beaulieu found some excuse for dismissing Durnford from his chamber, and, when the door closed after him, he clinched his hand, set his teeth hard together, and then exclaimed:

"Impudent scoundrel! how I should like to throw him out of the window! The rascal knows that I am about to marry the dreadful Irishwoman; he knows also the consumptive state of my finances, and that this is the *dernière ressource* for repairing them, so that he meant to give me the impertinent hint he just uttered! But I'll not forget it, and will find an opportunity of punishing him when he least expects it."

"Mrs. Maclaurin sends her compliments to your lordship, and hopes you will be able to venture into her apartment to-day. This is the fourth message she has sent since this morning, my lord," said Durnford, entering the apartment.

"Psha!" muttered Lord Alexander Beaulieu, contracting his brows in a mode that indicated any thing but satisfaction at this new proof of the unremitting attention of the lady of his thoughts. "Make my compliments to Mrs. Maclaurin, and say that I hope to be able to wait on her in the evening," replied Lord Alexander; and, when Durnford retreated, he turned up his eyes to the ceiling, as if to invoke patience, and exclaimed, "Was ever a man so beset, so tormented as I am by this indefatigable woman?—no peace, no rest from her overwhelming attentions. I had hoped that the plea of illness would have availed to procure me a respite from her *petits soins*, but it has not; so, having now enacted the *rôle* of *malade* long enough to avert all suspicion of my identity with the conjurer, I must even declare myself in a state of convalescence, and face my tormentor. O, Poverty! what ills dost thou inflict on thy luckless victims: and, as if in league with thee, and to add to thy woes, taste conspires to render thy presence more appalling. This last offspring of civilization and refinement inculcates a quick perception of all that is fine or beautiful; and when was admiration known, unaccompanied by the desire of appropriation? which, when indulged, is followed by a host of evils too dreadful to enumerate. Why, O Destiny! was I, a wretched younger brother, endowed with tastes and appetites which only the fortune of an elder one, and of a wealthy house, too, could supply! To what base uses does poverty compel us!—to smile at the bad jokes of every obtuse Amphitryon who keeps a good cook; to listen to the twaddle of every old dowager who gives *recherché* dinners; to toady every fool who keeps fine hunters for other men to ride, and preserves for other men to shoot in; but, most of all, to wed some monster for her gold, which, if reduced to dust, would be hardly sufficient to blind those whose eyes are open to her defects and vulgarity, and who view the husbands of such women with sentiments nearly akin to contempt. Psha! I must not think of all this: I must look only on the fair side of the picture, on the power of indulging all one's tastes and desires with the wealth thus acquired. Let me revel, in anticipation, in the delights I mean to enjoy. I will deny myself nothing that money can purchase; and, when I have exhausted old pleasures, I will, like the voluptuary of yore, offer rewards to him who can invent new ones."

This soliloquy was interrupted by the arrival of Doctor Gillinswedh, who, bowing, and eyeing his patient anxiously, commenced the usual inquiries.

"Your lordship is better, I perceive. Yes, certainly better. My treatment has perfectly succeeded: generally—indeed, I may say always—it does. A little fever still remaining—must subdue it. I shall prescribe three new draughts, to be taken in the course of the day; they will, I doubt not, produce the best effect."

"When am I to be allowed something to eat, doctor?" said the pretended invalid, strongly tempted to laugh at the recollection of the succulent repasts he had daily indulged in since he had been ordered to have recourse only to barley-water.

"Not yet, my lord—not yet. This pulse," and he counted the beatings of his patient's pulse, "is not in a state to warrant my permitting your lordship to take any solid sustenance. A little *very* weak chicken-broth, with a small, a very small piece of toast, is all that I can at present allow. If in another week every feverish symptom subsides, I will permit your lordship a more generous diet. Believe me, I am most anxious for your lordship's convalescence; and the anxiety of your fair neighbour, who has sent for me to report progress on your lorship's case, has increased my importance for your recovery. A very charming lady, my lord—very charming, indeed. A very superior understanding, and great knowledge of the world."

"O, most base wordling and hypocrite!" thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, disgusted with the fulsome panegyrics of the doctor on Mrs. Mackintosh, the only notice of which he took was a very cold and stiff nod of the head. "The fact, doctor, is," said Lord Alexander, "that I now feel so perfectly well, that I do not require a continuation of your visits; and therefore permit me to thank you for your skill and care, of which I have had such satisfactory proofs;" and he handed the diurnal fee to the physician.

"But really, my lord, if you will allow me to advise, I would just hint the prudence of your lordship's continuing under my care for another week. All danger of a relapse will then be removed, and I shall feel satisfied of your perfect safety."

"A thousand thanks, doctor, for your kindness, of which, however, I will not any longer avail myself, as I now feel my health, thanks to your care, quite re-established."

"I hope your lordship won't have any cause to repent this unwise measure; and, above all, I trust, my lord, you will observe great abstemiousness in your *régime*; and, wishing you a happy termination to your convalescence, I have the honour to take my leave."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was on the point of breaking into a

hearty laugh, when the door again opened, and Doctor Gillingsworth entered.

"Beg pardon, my lord—beg pardon; but may I entreat the favour of your lordship's recommendation to any of your lordship's friends or acquaintances who may happen to be taken ill at Rome? A very unhealthy climate, my lord; miasma very injurious, and particularly to English constitutions. I have studied the climate, its peculiarities, and the maladies to which it subjects strangers. Your lordship has undergone the penalty of the Roman malaria, and, I flatter myself, can speak favourably of my mode of treating its effects."

"Certainly, doctor, I will not fail to recommend you."

While this interview was taking place between Lord Alexander Beaulieu and Doctor Gillingsworth, Justine, the *femme de chambre* of Mrs. Maclaurin, stepped in to pay a visit to Durnford, the *valet de chambre* of his lordship.

"Ah! you not good lover; not attentive, no vay, Monsieur Dornfort. I come to see vat you do. Ven *les messieurs* vil not come to *les dames*, *les dames* are obliged to go to *les messieurs*. But dis is only in England; in France—*la belle France*—*les messieurs* are more polite."

"All that's very well, my pretty Justine; but I'll be hanged if in all France you can find a fellow who loves you as well as I do, although no later than two hours ago I refused to marry you."

"*Quelle idée!* Refuse to marry me! Ven dere is not von day dat you not tell me you are so impatient, so very impatient to marry me. Vat does dis mean, Monsieur Dornfort?

"It only means, my pretty Justine, that my lord and master has a particular desire that you and I should be wedded."

"Vat is dat vedded? I do not understand."

"It is another word for being married."

"*Mon Dieu, quel langage barbare!*" and Mademoiselle Justine shrugged her shoulders, and turned up her eyes like a true Parisian. "But vy for milor vish you and me married?"

"He has his own reasons, you may be sure, for he is a deep one, I can tell you, and does nothing without some motive. It may be that, finding you so pretty, Justine, and your mistress so plain, he thinks the sight of your face might console him for being compelled to look on hers."

"*Quelle bêtise!*" and Justine affected to look shocked.

"Or it may be," resumed Durnford, "that he thinks it will

better suit his purposes and interests to have us both married. Be this as it may, he proposed the measure to me this morning, and I said that if the matter was made well worth my while I would not object, but otherwise I had rather a prejudice against matrimony."

"*Oh! le mauvais sujet.*"

"He asked me what I meant by being made worth my while, and I answered that if I got two thousand pounds as a marriage portion I would wed you. He directly grew cool on the subject, said you would have a very comfortable fortune of your own, and in short bowed out of the affair, looking devilishly angry into the bargain, at having his scheme defeated. It vexed me to see him wishing to dispose of me according to his own will and pleasure, yet refusing to come down with any money, so I gave him a rub that I saw hit him hard. What do you think I said to him, Justine?"

"How can I tell? You talk of rubs, and hit hard. I not know vat all dat means."

"I said I would not like to marry a wife for her money, or to be dependant on one, and he grew red in the face and looked very angry."

"*Ah! je sens, je sens*, I see vat you mean. You mean dat you not like to do vat he is going to do. Dat is vat ve call in France *un coup de patte*, much better vay to say it dan your English rubs and hit hard, vich mean noting. *Cétait bien malhonnête.* It vas very impertinent, Monsieur Dornfort, and I am surprise your master not turn you avay. If he had de honour to be French nobleman he vould, but de English are so *bête* dey not know vat is right."

"As you are going to marry an Englishman, Ma'mselle Justine, I don't think you ought to speak against my nation. I don't like it at all, I can tell you."

"Bah! don't be fool. I not speak against de English *valets de chambre*, I only speak of de masters."

"Oh, that's quite another affair. You may abuse them as much as you like."

"And so you refuse to your master to marry me! Oh! *quelle bonne farce*, ven ve two do so lofe von anoder dat ve marry even if he not like it."

"Nevertheless, my pretty Justine, if I can manage to get some money out of my lord, if even only a few hundreds to add to your five thousand, it will be all the better. We will set up a hotel

in a fashionable street, and soon make a fortune, as many others have done who commenced business with less money."

"All dat is ver vell, but I be not in such hurry to leave madame vile I can make ver moche more moneys vid her. You know not vat I make her do. Ven she has one robe costs twenty guineas I say she not look vell in it, and she gives it to me at vonce. Same ting vid pelisses, shawls, cloaks, and *chapeaux*. She will never vear one ting I say is ugly, or dat makes her look so, and as I every veek find out dat someting does spoil her appearance, you may suppose dat I get ever so many tings vich I sell for moche moneys. Oh! de place of madame is ver good for dat, so I not like to give it up."

"You may be sure, Justine, the place will become a much less profitable one after my master has married your mistress, for he will spend her money so fast that he will leave little for her use."

"Ah! you tink so, Mr. Dornfort! Vell, I tink de same, and I say, is it better for me to let dis fool mistress of mine marry dis milor dat has ver little moneys, and I know if he had moche he not marry an ugly and vulgar voman like madame, or for me to prevent it?—and after I tought many times till my poor head have de pain, I tought if I can make dis milor give me five tousand pounds, vich makes von hundred and twenty-four tousand francs in French moneys, I vill have her to marry him. If, *au contraire*, dis milor not consent to let me have his bond for dat sum, I vill never let madame marry him, so..."

"There is my lord's bell. I must leave you, my pretty Justine; but do let me have one kiss before we part."

"Vell, just von, and no more, and take care you not *chiffon* my ribbons or my hair."

"You Frenchwomen always think a great deal more about your ribbons than your lover, and..... Oh! there's that plaguy bell again."

Durnford hastily imprinted a kiss on the cheek of Mademoiselle Justine, and hurried to the chamber of his master, while she returned to the apartment of Mrs. Maclaurin, fully determined, now that she was aware that once that lady became a wife, her profusion would be checked, to obtain as much as possible from her before that event took place, or, in vulgar phraseology, to make hay while the sun was shining.

Durnford was summoned to assist his master to a warm bath, after which a *recherché* dinner that would not have shamed that

prince of Amphitryons. Lucullus himself, was served to the epicurean; and while Lord Alexander Beaulieu did ample justice to the skill of the cook, and his own *savoir faire* in the selection of the dishes ordered, he more than once smiled at the notion that while he was thus indulging his appetite he was supposed by his future *cara sposa* to be strictly following the most severe *régime*. "I must arrange when I am married not to have that creature to dine with me. I never could stand it, for it spoils my appetite to see her devour her food, just as much as when I used to see wild beasts fed at the Zoological Gardens in London, a sight which always made me loathe my dinner that day."

Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of this heartless voluptuary as he sipped his well-iced champagne, contemplating with no slight satisfaction that henceforth he need not depend on the hospitality of acquaintances for the luxuries hitherto only obtained at their cost, as the ample wealth of her whom, though he despised and disliked, he was about to wed, would secure him all the indulgences which, to his sensual nature, formed the pleasures, if not the happiness, of life. And yet, while dwelling with immeasurable satisfaction on the advantages to be obtained by the large fortune of Mrs. Maclaurin, no sentiment of good will or gratitude were excited in his breast for her who was to bestow it on him. No, hardened by his intercourse with the worldly, which aroused into action all the selfishness of his nature, Lord Alexander Beaulieu thought only of securing the means and appliances to administer to his own grovelling appetites, and would not merely have denied every luxury to her who brought him wealth, but would gladly have seen her expire as soon as she had invested him with it.

Yet this was the man who was pronounced, by the generality of his acquaintances, to be "a devilish good sort of fellow, as times go." To be sure, his selfishness was universally known, but this was so common a defect among those with whom he associated that it ceased to be considered one, and was only commented on when some exercise of it interfered with or crossed the equal selfishness of one of his *soi disant* friends, who would exclaim, "Hang that fellow, Beaulieu! what a selfish animal he is! Would you believe it?—he refused to let me off a foolish wager I made with him, or to let me have his bay horse, unless I paid him thrice its value." Many of the persons who accused Lord Alexander Beaulieu, practised no less selfishness themselves, consequently, he, fully aware

of this fact, was unconscious of being, in any degree, more faulty than others; or, if he ever reflected on the matter—which, with his habits, it is not likely he ever did—he would have been disposed to plume rather than to disparage himself, for the possession of this all-engrossing devotion to self. He had a very unfavourable opinion of the world—founded, perhaps, on his knowledge of one specimen of the genus, who form its aggregate—and that specimen was no other than himself. He believed men capable of every meanness, if not of every crime, because he felt that, in his own case, the stings of conscience, or the dictates of honour, were alike powerless to induce him to relinquish any scheme that might tend to further his acquisition of wealth, or enjoyment of pleasure. High-minded and noble characters were above his comprehension, for he had no sympathy with any such persons, nay, it would be difficult, if not totally impossible, to convince him of their existence; but, if convinced, he would, in all human probability, have smiled at them in contemptuous derision, as weak men, Quixotic fools, born to be dupes to clever persons like himself.

It frequently occurred to him to desire to know whether his machinations to sow dissension between Miss Sydney and Strathern had been attended with success. He had given instructions to Durnford to admit the latter if he called, calculating that Doctor Gillingsworth would not fail to give sufficient publicity to his feigned indisposition to draw inquiries to his door from those whom he considered to be his friends. Those among them whom he least wished to see did call, but Strathern contented himself with sending his servant to inquire; so here his curiosity was defeated.

"Did you see Mr. Strathern's servant when he called?" demanded he of Durnford.

"No, my lord, he merely inquired after your lordship's health, of the porter, and left his master's card."

"While I am absent at Mrs. Maclaurin's, I wish you would endeavour to see that person—Mrs. Bloxfield, is not that her abominable name?"

"Bloxham, my lord?"

"And discover from her whether she knows how matters are going on at Mrs. Sydney's—whether Mr. Strathern is as frequently there as formerly—in short, find out all you can from that gossiping old woman, whom you told me was a crony of Miss Sydney's superannuated *femme de chambre*."

"Your lordship shall be made acquainted with every particular."

"But mind, Durnford, you must on no account let this Mrs. Bloxham suspect that *I* have the least curiosity in the world on the subject. I have the greatest objection that this should be even guessed at."

"Your lordship need not be in the least alarmed. I am always on my guard, and Mrs. Bloxham is so indefatigable in getting news of every thing, and about every body, and so desirous of relating all she hears to whoever may fall in her way, that it is seldom necessary to ask her any question."

"And now I must pay my visit to Mrs. Maclaurin. Heighho!" and Lord Alexander Beaulieu extended his mouth to its utmost dimensions in a yawn, and his arms to their widest extent in a position that proved more than words could have done, the overwhelming sense of weariness and *ennui* which the thoughts of the anticipated interview with that lady occasioned him. Nevertheless, he bestowed his usual pains in adorning his person, insisted on his *valet de chambre's* brushing into a more becoming form a refractory lock that waved over his temples, changed no less than three neckcloths ere he was satisfied with the tie, and commanded a more than ordinary portion of Eau de Portugal to be sprinkled on his pocket handkerchief, as a precaution against the powerful odour of the dainties with which Mrs. Maclaurin was in the habit of regaling herself at various hours in the day, to the no slight annoyance of the olfactory nerves of her *soi-disant* admirer. "Go and inquire if Mrs. Maclaurin is at home and ready to receive my visit."

"Yes, my lord," and off hurried Durnford, while his master, taking another look at himself in the Psyche glass, slowly followed him.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"By change of scene men often try
From dull ennui and care to fly,
And fondly hope to leave behind
The thoughts that weigh upon the mind;
But soon they're forced to own how vain
Is change of scene to banish pain—
Man bears within, where'er he goes,
That which destroys, or gives repose."

"Well, hang me if it didn't give me a queer sort of feeling when I saw that Livy was so cut up at my leaving her," said Lord Fitz-

warren to his travelling companion, Mr. Webworth, as, seated side by side in his well-appointed carriage, they rolled rapidly along, leaving the City of the Cæsars behind them. "The poor girl," resumed he, "behaved devilish well, I must say, for, though greatly moved, she restrained her tears, knowing that I can't bear having lachrymose scenes."

"Yeth, Lady Olivia ith a vewy chaming pethon," said, or rather lisped Mr. Webworth, whose pronunciation had the peculiarity of always omitting the letter R.

"I don't know about her being very charming, as you call it, Webworth, but she is a deuced good sort of girl as times go, and very much attached to me."

"Yeth, vewy."

"I sometimes almost wish she was *not* so devilish fond of me. I swear to you I do, for were she less so, or were I quite convinced that the disappointment would not break her heart, I should be tempted to break off my engagement to her, for I'll be hanged if I know why I entered into it, nor do I feel at all towards her as I did towards Miss Sydney—that is, I'm not at all in love with Livy."

"Indeed, how vewy odd!"

"The fact is, Webworth, Livy, poor girl, fell in love with me. 'Twasn't her fault, poor thing, nor mine neither, for the matter of that. You'd be surprised if you knew the number of girls that have taken a fancy to me. Miss Sydney was the only one who was not ready to say 'yes,' before I asked 'will you?' And yet, strange to say, she is the only girl I ever really cared for."

"She's a vewy lovely cweathure, I musth confeth."

"I wish I had never seen her, for somehow or other, she's always running in my head, and when I look at poor Livy, and see how unlike, and I must add, how inferior she is to Louisa, I get so out of conceit with her, that I long to break off the engagement. There's no more comparison between the two girls than between my beautiful mare Fanny—you remember Fanny?—and Cotsmore's mare, Brown Bess. The one thorough-bred, small-boned, full of blood, and with high action; and the other, heavy-limbed, clumsy, and slow in her paces."

"But, my good fellow, it's too late to find all thith out now, and, as Lady Olivia is so vewy much attached to you, you ought to banish Mith Thydney from you mind."

"And so I try to do, but it's not so easily accomplished, I can tell you. That pretty face of hers is continually recurring to my mind, and that fine shape. Then what a stepper she is! By Jove, I never saw a creature more perfect in her paces since my poor Fanny. Ah, Webworth, if that girl had but taken a fancy to me she might have managed me just as she pleased: but the devil of it is, that all the women I don't care a farthing for are jumping to have me, and this, the only one I ever loved, would hardly condescend to look at me."

"It thtainly ith vewy dithagweeable, my dear fellow, vewy dithagweeable indeed, and it ith much to be wished that you had not pwopothed to Lady Olivia."

"And the dence of it is, Webworth, that I don't see the least chance of getting out of the scrape, for poor Livy is *so* fond of me, and so deuced good-natured, that, do what I will, she never gets angry, though I see it almost breaks the poor thing's heart to see me always going away to one place or another. Now there are some women who would take huff at once, and say, 'You may go to the——, and never come back, for I won't have you.' I tried to get Livy's mettle up several times, in the hope that she would get angry and break off our engagement, but it was all in vain. She loves me too well, poor girl, and would put up with anything rather than lose me. One consolation I shall have, however, which is, that I shall have my own way on every point when we're married. I have taken care of this, and broken her in well, I can tell you. She is always ready to cry amen to everything I say; and this will be a great comfort, won't it?"

"Yeth, thetainly, a vewy gweat comfot indeed."

"But isn't it strange, Webworth, that knowing this, and knowing also that, if Miss Sydney had consented to have me, she would have had everything her own way,—ay, and would probably have made me give up racing and hunting, and my clubs; for I was so bewitched by her that I could refuse nothing that she wished, yet I cannot help every day—ay, by Jove, every hour—regretting that she is not to be my wife, and envying that fellow Strathern for winning such a prize. This it is to be in love," and Lord Fitzwarren drew a deep sigh. "Were you ever in love, Webworth?"

"Not that I wemembe.'

"Not that you remember! Why, what a strange fellow you must be? If you were once hard hit, as I call it - that is, really

in love—you would never forget it, I can tell you, for it's no joke. Heighho!"

"Many pethons have told me tho, but I thuppothe the's a gweat deal in imagination. One petthy gil seemth to me to be so extuemely like anothe petthy gil, that I neve could make out how a man cath moe about one of them than anothe, tho I conclude that it muth be all imagination."

"Ha, ha, ha! 'Pon my soul, Webworth, you are a devilish droll fellow, and make me laugh whether I will or not. The postboys get along famously. I had no notion that these cursed Italians, or their horses either, could go at such a pace. There's something exhilarating in the rapid movement of a well-built travelling carriage, bowled along by four horses; and though those that are pulling mine on are no great things to look at, they are quite equal in speed to our English ones. The rude harness and rope-traces did, to be sure, shock me at first when I travelled, but I have now got accustomed to all that sort of thing? Have you?"

"I neve noticeth it, fou I genally fall athleep when I tuavel. All I eve wemark on the woad ith the bad dinneth and bucakfasths."

"I have taken care to guard against them by having a regular supply of edibles with me. My courier put up a *pâté de Périgord*, which I had from Paris expressly for my journey, with a ham from Bayonne, some chickens, Bologna sausages, and a few other things, so we shan't be starved, my dear Webworth."

"Did you oda any wine to be put up with the eatableth? If not, you will find the stuff to be had at the inns not duinakable."

"I am not so young a traveller as to forget the wine—ay, or good white French brandy either. My fellow has laid in a provision."

"You aue just the fellow I like to tuavel with, my dea Fitzwauen, you undestand comfot."

"It's odd how much lighter my spirits get as I remove further from Rome! I haven't felt so cheerful since the unlucky day I was such a fool as to propose for Livy. Now that I am safe off, all that foolish engagement seems like a dream, and a devilish disagreeable one, too. I wish from the bottom of my heart it was but a dream. Heighho!"

"You will spoil all you comfot by thinking about it, my dea fellow. When any dithagueeable thing occuth to me, I make it a point neva to think of it."

"A very wise plan, but one which does not always depend

on onesself to adopt. If it did, who would ever be unhappy?"

"Oh! the au some pethens tho foolish that they au always fuet-ting about one thing au anothe, when, if they would think moe of a good dinna and wine they might foget the twoubleth. I know but one tuue cause fo grief."

"And what is that, my good fellow?"

"Not having enough money to have evewy day a capital dinna, and the best wine. With these tholid comfots I can't imagine how any sensible man can be unhappy."

"Well, you are easily satisfied, I must say, Webworth. But you don't allow the mind, then, to have any influence in one's happiness?"

"Thetainly not. One's mind ought to be ath much in one's own powe as one's hand au foot; I know mine ith."

"Then all I can say is that you're a devilish lucky dog. But what do you think about—when you're alone, for instance?"

"I think about my bweakfast, au my dinna, au my thuppa. I wonda whethe it will be ath good as I expect, and I get up my appetite by thinking of it: and tho I have a fuesh inteuest eveuy day, thumthing to look fouaud to twice or thuee times in the twenty-fou hous; and if that ith not enough to occupy any thensible man's mindt, I know not whath ith."

"I thought you were to be brought into parliament at one time by your cousin, Lord Amesbury. How did it go off, Webworth?"

"I at fist acthepted the pwoposal of Amesbuwy, who meely wanted to put me in ath a *locum tenens* until his thon became of age. But when I found that he expected me to be a constant attendant at the House of Commons to vote on evewy question, by which I should lose my dinna on an avewage thuee days in evewy week, au come in when evewy *entuée* worth eating wath spoiled, I declined, fo it would have completely destuoyed my comfot and happineth. Amesbuwy took it into his head to be affuonted with me, becauth I would not sacrifice my comfot to please him, and theue the affaia ended."

"But having no occupation—nothing to do—don't you often find the time hang heavy on your hands?"

"Neva, I wead all the cookewy books that au published, make notes of the beth dinneth that au given in the theathon, and the beth wines in the houtheth, and by making these notes I neve fouget which to thelect, and this ith always an occupation. I can tell in what houtheth one should take au avoid ceutain dishes au wines.

which ith the besth country houtheth to acthept invitations to, tho how, my good fellow, with this constant occupation can I find time eveu hang heavy on my hands?"

"Then you don't care whether the houses are pleasant or not, Webworth!"

"No houth can be unpleathant, wheue the owneus au not stingy, and wheue the cook is a peufet autist!"

"But agreeable people, do they count for nothing?"

"I hate what au called agueeable people. They only seuve to duaw off one's attention fuom what is infinitely moue agueeable, in my opinion—a good dinna. I have always obseuved that wheue these thame agueeable pethons au to be found, the *entuées* guo cold before one is helped, fou when they aue telling thei *on dit* and anecdotes, people leave the seuvants waiting at theiu elbow with the *entuées*, while they either listhen au laugh, tho when the *plat* comes to a fellow like me, who having no title, am seuved about the lasth, it is not wouth eating. No, give me the houtheth whe the dinna is the whole and thole object with all who sith down to table, and whe the pleasue of eathing ith not intewupted by uihleth conveuthation, nau the digestion twoubled afte dinna by too much attention to it."

"By Jove, Webworth, you have reflected gravely on the subject of eating! It seems to have occupied your whole attention."

"It thetainly has, for what othe subject ith, ou could be, half tho inteuesting to me? People don't weflect half enough on this point, and the conthequence ith that though they have good cooks, and spae no expenth, they theldom have a good dinna. If men gave due consideuation to this impoutant thubject, they neveu would invite a theeond time any gueth who did not come punethually to the houa witten on the eaud of invitation. How many good and *recheché* dinnas have I not theen spoiled by having been kept waiting a half houa and longa, because the gueths had not the politeneth to awive in time, and I have heud these same guesths at their clubs, that night, complain how cold the vewy same dinnas weu, which they had kept waiting, and attack the weputation of a good cook, afteu having defeated his exetions to display histh taleuth."

"You grow positively eloquent on this topic, my dear Webworth. I had no notion you had studied it so profoundly," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"I don't think we eva conveused on it befoe. Indeed, in thothiety one neva has time to enta guavely on any subject, howeva intuesting

it ith only twavelling *tête-à-tête*, ath we au now, in a comfotable cawiage, with the pleasing puespective of a good dinna, that I could take the tuouble of entwing on thuch a thubject.

"Hang me, Webworth, if I don't think you a devilish deal more clever fellow than I took you to be; and if I don't consider you wiser than most, if not any of our mutual friends, in circumscribing your happiness to one focus, and that one so easily to be acquired."

"By the wealthy, yeth, but by the pooa, no. You foget that I am a pooa devil, who have only enough to buy bwead and cheese, as folks thay, two things vewy well in thei way, ath accessowies with vayous otheu good things, but by themselves only fit for clowns."

"But though not rich, surely you can always afford a good dinner; that costs so little."

"*Cela dépend, mon che!* A tough beefsteak, mutton, with *pain à discetion*, cutlet, washed down with *vin oudinaie*, might thatithfy thome men, and costsh little, I gwant, but such faye dithgusth me, and unleth I meet with thome hothpitable fellow like youthelf to give a good dinna, I am left without one, for a coffee-houth dinna at ou clubs is my avesion. Fitzwauen, you au a lucky dog, and ought to be one of the happiest fellowth alive, yet you allow youthelf to be fwetted about women, which I cannot undestand. I only know that if I had but even one quata of you fotune, I should conside mythelf the happiest fellow in the whole wold."

"But that would not be enough to keep up an establishment, Webworth, nor horses, nor to allow of your indulging in various other little pleasures."

"'Twould be enough to allow me a thmall comfotable bachela's house, a capital cook, and an easy Buoughaun, with two stwong hortheth to dwaw it about, a vewy easy chai, a comfotable thofa, a Fwench bed, and what moe could a thenthible man desie to make him happy?"

"Well, I must say, my dear Webworth, that you are not unreasonable in your wishes, and I can only add, that you shall never want a good dinner while I have one, and that you may reckon on sure winter quarters at whichever of my places I happen to be at, so long as I live."

"Thanks, my dea Fitzwauen; you have always been moath kind to me, and I feel it deeply, I athue you."

"And what is more, my good fellow, I will take care to secure

you an annuity, for your life, of three hundred and sixty-five guineas a-year, which will give you a guinea a-day towards providing you a good dinner a-day—nay, by Jove! as you will always have a room at each of my places in the country, and the run of my house, you can put by your guinea a-day for the six months, my dear fellow, and so have two a-day for the season in London."

"I am quite ovepoweed by you vewy geat kindneth, my dea Fitzwauen, and feel at a loth how to thank you."

"I want no thanks, my good fellow. What's the good of being rich, if one don't help those who are less fortunate in that respect. I'll have the deed of annuity drawn up the moment I get back to England; and, lest any accident should occur to me before then, I'll just add a codicil to my will, which I always carry about with me in my writing-box."

"I am not able to expewth what I feel, I assure you I am not, Fitzwauen, fo this act of fwiendship on you paat to me, who have no claim whateva on you genewosity."

"Not a word more on the subject, my dear Webworth. You, I am quite sure, would have done just as much for me, were our positions exchanged, and I have real satisfaction in being of use to you."

"I wish that I, in tun, could be of uth to you, but I know only one way in which I can puove my thenth of you fuiendship. I'll take you *chef-de-cuithine* undeu my especial chage, when we go back to England, and I answea fou it you dinnaus shall be the most *recheché* in London. I understandth the sot of thing, and it will be an agueeable occupation fou me. But I thee we aye come to ou halting-place, which I am glad of, ath I am well dithpothed to dine. I hope you couyier has had the good thenth to have thome thoup weady, and whateve elthe the inn can affod, for one thometinthe in these sot of places hits on a tolewable *plat national*, and that offe's a vawiety that is agueeable."

"I dare say my fellow has done right, for he is sharp, and has all his wits about him. Here he comes, stumping along in his jack-boots to welcome us, with a face red from the fire, where probably he has been assisting to prepare some delicacy of his *façon* for our dinner. I hope these clumsy postillions will not break the pole of my carriage in the sharp turn to the inn door. How the fellows hollo, and gallop. By Jove, we had a narrow escape there! Well, here we are, my boy. Any chance of a good dinner, eh, Frazzini?"

"Ah! milor, I vork and vork—see my face, so burn vid fire. Cuisinier not moche good. I have made de *menestra*, dat is de soupe, and I have de *côtellettes*, and de *poulet rôti*; and I have de room broshed, and I do mon possible to make milor comfortable."

"Come along, Webworth. Egad! my legs are so cramped, that I can hardly walk. Let us have dinner as soon as possible, Frazzini, for I am as hungry as a hunter. Belton, have the provisions and some wine unpacked immediately. Now, mind and take care you don't shake the wine."

"Be tho good, Belton, as to keep the bottles on thei thidthe," said Webworth, with an anxious face, "and thee if you cannot procua thome ithe."

Lord Fitzwarren and his friend entered the inn, preceded by Frazzini, while Belton, looking after them, shrugged his shoulders, and muttered to the other servant, who was already beginning to unpack the light *fourgon* which contained the provisions—

"Always thinking of his stomach, and giving trouble, and never letting one see the colour of his money for all that. I wonder what my lord can see in him, I am sure, that he saddles himself with him, lumbering up his carriage, and franking him all through his journey. Bundle out the things, Thomas. Come, be quick."

"I'm afraid of shaking the wine," answered Thomas.

"Never mind, they'll drink it all the same, I warrant me; and if *they* don't *I* will. I know my lord don't much care about it; and, as to that screw Webworth, I'm glad to spite him, for he's always giving trouble, and trying to put my lord up to things which would injure my place."

"Ah! Mr. Belton," observed Thomas, "it's not to be told how these sort of gentlemen—who are not, after all, gentlemen—injure poor servants. Being poor, they are obliged to look sharp after every shilling, so they get to know the real value of things as well as *we* do; and then they put our masters up to it, which spoils our just perquisites."

"There, Thomas, give that bottle of old sherry a good shake, and that will secure the greater part of it to me, for Mr. Webworth, forsooth, is so particular, that if it is not as clear as amber he won't touch it."

Thomas did as he was told, laughing while he performed the command of his superior, Mr. Belton, the *valet de chambre* of Lord Fitzwarren, to whom the domestics of his lordship paid much more attention than to their noble master.

"Bring a bottle of port wine for my use, Thomas, and be sure to shake it as little as possible. Keep it on its side, and walk steadily—I'll uncork it myself. I hope that foreign humbug, Frazzini, has taken care to have my dinner ready. I can't abide these d—d Italian or French fellows; but one can't do without them when one is travelling in their shabby countries, and don't speak their outlandish lingoes. I'm sure this *currier*, as he calls himself, makes a good profit by my lord on the road. It goes to my heart to see foreigners making money of Englishmen."

"Yes, Mr. Belton, so it does mine, too; but, as you justly say, it can't be helped, but it's a great pity."

"Take out the dressing-case, Thomas, and the chaise-seat, and have the imperial taken down. Lock the carriage-doors, bring me the key, and I'll step and see whether my lord wants anything. But here comes Frazzini, hurrying and bustling about as if *he* did everything."

"Milor vant de *pâté de foie gras, la poularde, et le jambon.*"

"Here they are, Mr. Longboots."

"Vill you bring some of dese tings in vid me, Monsieur Tomas?"

"How can I? Don't you see I have the dressing-boxes, and chaise-seat, and himperials to bring in?"

"*Diavolo*! some von moste help me—I have not four hands."

"You can take one thing at a time, though, Mr. Currier."

"Vy not you help me, Monsieur Belton, or make Tomas help?"

"Because it is neither of our places. *You* are the currier, and it's *your* business to see that my lord has everything comfortable on the road."

"*Corpo di Bacco*! 'Tis nuff to make von mad! O de English servant, vat peoples, vat peoples! But milor must not be keep vaiting; so I take von ting in von arm, and von in de oder, and I come back. But you vill bring de vine?

"Not I."

"Tomas, vill you?"

"How can I, Mr. Frazzini, when I have more to do than I can manage?"

Off hurried the courier, bearing a *pâté* in one hand, and a ham in the other, the two English servants smiling in derision at his activity; and, when he was out of sight, Belton said—

"I would not let any one but him take the wine, for now he'll get the blame of its being shaken. I like to get these beastly foreigners into a scrape."

"So do I, Mr. Belton, for they're always trying to take the bread out of our mouths."

Though even the fastidious Webworth was compelled to acknowledge that—thanks to the indefatigable exertions of the good-tempered and active courier—a much better dinner was served than could have been expected on so short a notice, the wine was, owing to the shaking given to it by Thomas, undrinkable; and none that could be procured at the inn could console him for the loss of the old sherry with which he had anticipated to wash down the savoury viands that composed the repast with which he had so plentifully indulged his appetite. He made many and peevish remonstrances to Frazzini for his alleged want of attention in having shaken the wine, *malgré* all the assertions of the Italian to the contrary; for, conscious that he had moved it as cautiously as possible, the courier felt much hurt at the censure bestowed on him. He, nevertheless, when Lord Fitzwarren's dinner was removed, and before he thought of satisfying his own hunger, went to the chamber designed for Mr. Webworth, and, finding that not a single article for that gentleman's use had been brought up from the carriage, he, having obtained the key from Mr. Belton, who was dining as luxuriously as his master, conveyed to Mr. Webworth's chamber all that appertained to that gentleman, and arranged the bed, and saw that a good fire was lighted in the brasier to air the room, murmuring to himself while he did so, in Italian, which we render into our language—

"O, those English servants! what selfish persons they are, thus to neglect the friend of their master, who, having no domestic of his own on the journey, would be left to want everything if I did not attend to his comfort! And yet he is continually finding fault with all I do; but, poor man, he can't help it, I dare say; it is his country, where the sun so seldom shines, and those dreadful fogs, of which I have heard so much, that has soured his mind. Ah! who would be well or happy without sunshine and a clear atmosphere? It is the want of these blessings that renders the English, with all their wealth, so difficult to be pleased, that the greatest luxuries cannot content them, and even their pampered servants have the same dissatisfied notions. Eat, eat at every post, finding everything bad, yet devouring all, and pouring liquid fire, in the shape of *eau-de-vie*, down their throats, which inflames their blood, and makes their tempers so bad. Ah! Giovanni Frazzini! thank God that, though poor, you are happier than these proud islanders!"

## CHAPTER XXV.

"The heart where Love hath made its nest
Will find him a tormenting guest,
As 'tis by long experience shown
That never doth he come alone;
Doubt, fear, wild jealousy, and pain,
Are aye attendants in his train,
Nor leave him till he sinks to sleep,
When they no longer vigils keep;
And those who did his stings deplore
Lament that he can wound no more."

Sunshine was again restored to the breast of Louisa Sydney, and if any doubt of the devoted attachment of her lover still lingered there, it was so faint, that she was almost, if not quite, unconscious of its existence. The chagrin she had lately experienced made her appreciate still more highly her present happiness, and she determined never more to allow her mind to be poisoned by so unworthy a guest as suspicion, and henceforth to forget that she was that which so many envy and desire to be—an heiress. Strathern, while he felt his passion for her increased by the recent misunderstanding between them, which had alarmed him into a dread of losing her, was also aware that his confidence in the stability of her affection had received a shock from the effects of which time alone could remove the trace, and that he no longer, as previously, believed her temper to be as faultless as he had once imagined it to be. He, nevertheless, concealed in his own breast "the change that had come over the spirit of his dream," and Louisa, even with the piercing eyes of love, could detect nothing to alarm or displease her in his manner. Mrs. Sydney, gratified at witnessing the good understanding re-established between the lovers, soon forgot that it had ever known any interruption, and abandoned herself to the happiness founded on a belief that her daughter's would soon be irrevocably secured by a union with the only man she had ever considered worthy of her hand.

But, while peace was restored to those so dear to each other, and Hope, the enchantress, smiled most brightly on them, there was one person beneath the roof of Mrs. Sydney who marked the

renewal of affection between Louisa and Strathern with regret. This was no other than Nurse Murray, whose mind had been worked on by the frequently-repeated misrepresentations of Mrs. Bloxham, until she had learned to think that a marriage between her young lady and Mr. Strathern would be the greatest evil that could befall her on whom she doated. The imprudent confidence reposed in her by Miss Sydney on her return from the masked ball, a confidence which that young lady had never ceased to regret, had awakened strong suspicions in her breast that the charges preferred against Mr. Strathern were not wholly unfounded. From the commencement of Louisa's attachment for him, the nurse saw, or fancied that she saw, a marked diminution in the confidence and affection of her young mistress towards herself. This change, which was but the result of the maidenly reserve peculiar to a first love, alarmed and pained the devoted but somewhat selfish feelings of Murray, who thus reasoned :—

"If, before they are married, he so entirely engrosses all her affection, as thus to estrange her confidence from me, who have never left her a day since her birth—from me, who dote on her as I did on her father, who was dear to me as my own child—him whom I fostered at my breast—what may I expect when she becomes his wife? I saw she was displeased with me for advising her to pause, and not to shut her ears against advice. She has never shown me the same liking or confidence ever since—has never seemed to notice my lowness of spirits, my altered looks; she who used to remark the least change in me, and comfort and console me whenever I was unhappy! I am now become but little necessary to her happiness, though mine depends entirely on her, and I soon shall cease to be regarded by her—nay, more, in all probability her husband will find out that I am too old and awkward to be lady's-maid to one so fair and youthful, and whom he will desire to see decorated to the utmost advantage, or to travel with them as rapidly as young people like them are accustomed to travel, and I shall be pensioned off, or sent to her seat, to pass the remainder of my days away from my darling, as her poor father's favourite old horse was. Oh, if I could but break off this marriage! She is so beautiful and so good, that she would soon have other admirers, and would not, I hope, long grieve for this one, of whom I am sure Mrs. Bloxham knows more than she chooses to tell. I'll endeavour to find out what made her shake her head so gravely when she spoke of him, and when I know all, I'll

tell my young lady everything I hear; yes, even though she should be angry at my freedom. I was in hopes that there would be a lasting breach between them after the masked ball, for I saw she was greatly vexed and grieved that night and the whole of the day after; but where the love is, women so soon forgive and forget that in ten days all anger was over, and now they seem fonder than ever. Ah! well-a-day, and so it was with me long years ago."

Thus reasoned Nurse Murray, as, a prey to jealousy for the present, and dread of the future estrangement of her young mistress, she sat alone in her chamber.

That day she went to visit Mrs. Bloxham, whose presence Durnford, the *valet de chambre* of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, had but half an hour previously quitted, he having gained from the gossiping *femme de chambre* a knowledge of all she knew of the affairs of Mrs Sydney, her daughter, and Mr. Strathern, and, still more, of all she suspected; for Mrs. Bloxham had the habit of supplying any discrepancy in the information she sought to acquire by adding her suppositions of probabilities and possibilities, in which veracity was little regarded. But, much as she delighted in promulgating news, she had a still greater pleasure in receiving it; hence the society of Mr. Durnford was peculiarly acceptable to her, and his visits always left her in good humour with herself, and brimful of all the gossip known to the *coteries* of the *valetaille* of the English at Rome.

"This is very kind of you, my dear Mrs. Murray," said Mrs. Bloxham. "You so seldom come to see me, that it's quite a treat to have a visit from you. Pray sit down in this chair, it's more comfortable than the others. O, Mrs. Murray, this is very unlike the housekeeper's room I'd have to receive you in if we were in England; for not only in our town house in Belgrave Square, but at both my lord's places in the country, the housekeeper's rooms are quite pictures of comfort."

"I dare say they are, in course, Mrs. Bloxham; but in this outlandish, heathenish sort of place, what can one expect? I assure you, I have searched all over the town to try and hire an easy chair or a sofa for the horrid room I sit in, without being able to get one; and it was with the greatest difficulty I was able to procure a piece of carpet and a footstool for myself."

"Lords and ladies owe an immense debt of gratitude to hupper servants, who give up their Henglish comforts to travel with 'em in foreign parts, Mrs. Murray."

"Indeed, they do, Mrs. Bloxham."

"Will you take a bit of cake and a glass of wine, ma'am?"

"No, thank you; it is not long since I had my lunch."

"You really must not refuse me;" and Mrs. Bloxham opened an *armoire* in the chamber, and drew forth a bottle of wine and some cake. "You'll find this Madeira very good, Mrs. Murray; we got it for my lord's particular use, and his lordship's very difficult to be pleased in wine; and dear enough it is, too, and hard to be got, into the bargain."

Mrs. Bloxham filled two glasses to the brim, handed one to her visiter, and raising the other to her own lips, said, "Here's to your good health, Mrs. Murray."

"I drink to yours, ma'am," replied the latter, sipping the wine with great unction.

"And how are your ladies, ma'am?"

"Quite well, I thank you—and her ladyship?"

"Never better, I'm obleeged to you. When is Miss Sydney to be married?"

"Not till we get back to England."

"Ah, well! I say nothing; but if I was her, I know that I'd look twice before I'd give up my liberty, and with such a fine fortune, too, to one who has no title: for what's the good of money, Mrs. Murray, if it don't get a young lady a title?"

"Why, there may be something in that, Mrs. Bloxham; yet Mrs. Sydney, who had a large fortin, and was a great beauty in her day, married a gentleman as had no title, and many a lady envied her good luck for getting such a husband. Oh! *he* was such a gentleman as I never saw his like, before or since."

Mrs. Bloxham, aware that when once nurse Murray began on the subject of her deceased master there would be great difficulty in stopping her, and by no means disposed to waste time in listening to a catalogue of his virtues and a reiteration of his praises, interrupted her visiter by pouring out a second glass of wine, which, although refused, she insisted on being drunk, and then, before the subject could be resumed, she observed—

"Yes, Mr. Strathern is not the husband *I* would, were I in your place, wish to see married to Miss Sydney."

"And why not, Mrs. Bloxham, if I may make so bold as to ask the question?"

"I am a very particular person, Mrs. Murray, and very cautious about what I say;" an assertion, the truth of which Mrs. Bloxham's

most intimate cronies would have been very much disposed to doubt; "but I know what I know."

"I suppose you do, ma'am; and that's just why I should like to be made acquainted with your meaning."

"Ah! Mrs. Murray, I wish I had not promised not to mention what I know; but I am tied down, or I would tell you every thing; and if you knew all, *you* would think as I do."

"Surely, between friends, and only you and I alone together, you might tell me, if not the whole, at least a part of what you know."

Here an ominous shake of the head, as full of meaning as that of Burleigh's, announced that Mrs. Bloxham was in possession of some mighty secret, which she did not seem disposed to communicate toher visiter.

"There's some people, Mrs. Murray, as is always ready to gossip and tell everything they know, but I was never one of them, and always have had a guard upon my lips, for I've thought to myself, 'least said is soonest mended.' No, I never was a fetcher or carrier of news, nor a tale-bearer, nor a mischief-maker, not I; though, lawk, I *have* heard sich things, Mrs. Murray, as would make the hair on your head stand on end."

"Not about Mr. Strathern, I hope," said Mrs. Murray, combining the last remark with the subject that most interested her, and now seriously alarmed.

"Mayhap yes, and mayhap no. Gentlemen *will* be wild and extravagant, ma'am, and some more than others, and *will* get into debts and scrapes, and more's the pity; and *will* be keeping company with wicked women, and spending thousands on 'em; but I'll say nothing. O, Mrs. Murray, we live in a wicked world, that's what we do; and, for my part, if I was a beautiful young lady with a large fortin, I'd never marry any one but some very rich and grand lord, whose estates were all hintailed, for then I'd be sure of always having a fine house over my head, and a great title, for these two things are a great comfort when husbands—and they all do, ma'am, after a few months of marriage—take back to their old ways."

"Then, if I understand you right, Mrs. Bloxham, Mr. Strathern is one of those sad scapegraces, and yet who'd have thought it? So steady, and settled like as he appears."

"Lauk, Mrs. Murray! don't understand no such thing. I'd be very sorry to say so. I only mentioned that gentlemen sometimes

are very wild, but I didn't name him more than any other, so don't mistake me."

"All I know, Mrs. Bloxham, is, that whatever you may have intended to say, the impression you left on my mind is, that you meant Mr. Strathern all the time you were speaking, and I'd take it much more kind of you if you were to come to the point at once than to be beating about the bush, blowing hot and cold with the same breath, as they say in my country."

"A word to the wise ought to be sufficient, Mrs. Murray. I'll say no more on that head, and I hope what I have told you in strict confidence will not be repeated, for, as I said before, I make it a point never to meddle or make in any one's business but my own, and no one ever could say that Fanny Bloxham was a gossip. If I was, I could tell *such things*, Mrs. Murray, as would surprise you, for I've lived in the best of families, with the grandest of lords and ladies, and have seen and heard of *such* doings—mercy on us!—as would take away your breath if I mentioned 'em. You've only had one place all your life, ma'am, as I've heard you say, and that with a couple who didn't live long enough together to be tired of each other, so all was smooth and quiet; but I've had several places, and always in the highest families, and if I was only to tell you what the ladies' maids and valets have told me in the housekeepers' rooms, you'd bless yourself."

"But how could you be sure that one-half of what they said was true? I wouldn't believe a quarter of it; and then to think of the wickedness of servants speaking against their masters and mistresses!"

"Lord love you! how innocent you are! It's easy to see you have not lived in any of the tiptop fashionable families, or you'd know better."

"I'm glad I never did, for I could not abide such wickedness. I couldn't bring myself to eat the bread of those I couldn't respect. It would stick in my throat."

"So you fancy, but you'd soon get used to it, for bread is bread, come from where it will."

Finding that she could elicit nothing positive against Mr. Strathern from Mrs. Bloxham, Mrs. Murray took her departure, her friendship for that acquaintance considerably cooled by this interview, while Mrs. Bloxham's estimation of her was reduced to a very low ebb indeed.

"She's a mere nobody—a vulgar old twaddle, as Mr. Durnford

called her, who knows nothing of high life," thought Mrs. Bloxham. "She wanted to pick my brains, but I saw through her at one glance, and let out nothing that could get me into a scrape; indeed, for the matter of that, I know nothing in particular of Mr. Strathern, for all Mr. Durnford said was that he was like all the rest of 'em 'ere wild young gentlemen, who's always in mischief; and, as the old saying is generally true that smooth water runs deep and the evil one is sure to be at the bottom, I dare say this young gentleman, who sets up to be so steady, is worse than the rest on 'em. I wonder what makes Mr. Durnford so anxious to know whether Mr. Strathern and Miss Sydney are as fond of each other as ever. He must have a reason for it, and I'll try to find it out when next I see him, that I will."

"Well, I'm no wiser than I was," thought Nurse Murray, as she walked home from her visit to Mrs. Bloxham, her ideas not a little confused by the insinuations and inuendoes of that gossiping woman, as well as by the two glasses of Madeira which she had been prevailed on to drink, and which, not being accustomed to indulge in such potent libations before dinner, had produced an unusual degree of excitement in her mind. "I feel all no how," thought she. "My head seems to go round, and my face feels like fire. I hope I shan't see either of my ladies until I am more composed, and that the redness is gone out of my face, for what *would* they think of me? I wish I knew what to believe about Mr. Strathern. May be, all that Mrs. Bloxham told me was untrue. I never can believe that lords and ladies can be so bad as she said, and if she told lies about them, she might also tell 'em about Mr. Strathern. Well, for my part, I don't know what to think; I hope all may turn out for the best, I am sure—and yet, if Mr. Strathern *should* be such a rake and spendthrift, it will make my poor dear young lady miserable, and break the heart of her poor mother, who has no other comfort in this life. Oh dear! how my head goes round, and my cheeks burn! I wish I hadn't been persuaded to drink that second glass. I declare, I feel all no how, and quite in a flutter."

When Nurse Murray attended to dress her young lady for dinner that day, the tumult in her mind, occasioned no less by the insinuation of Mrs. Bloxham than by her unusual indulgence in a very strong wine, had not subsided, and her altered appearance and evident emotion excited the suspicion and alarm of Miss Sydney, who, being really much attached to her old servant, took a great interest in her health. "What is the matter, my good Murray?"

demanded her young mistress. "You look flushed and agitated. Are you ill, or has any thing occurred to vex you?"

"Oh! it's nothing, my dear young lady. I'm only a little heated, and have a headache;" and here Murray, overcome by the affectionate interest displayed by Miss Sydney, and by the thought of the ignorance under which she laboured relative to the real character of him into whose hands she was about to confide her destiny, burst into tears.

"I see, my poor Murray, that you are really ill. You must immediately go to bed, and I will have a physician sent for."

"No, indeed, Miss Sydney, there is no occasion; I shall be better by and by. I am quite able to dress you, indeed I am."

"You must not be obstinate, Murray; you really must go to bed, and Mrs. Collinson will dress me."

"'Tisn't illness, indeed it isn't—it's only anxiety," and here another flood of tears testified that Murray's malady was more of the mind than of the body.

"Anxiety, my poor Murray; and pray what about?" asked Miss Sydney, with undissembled astonishment.

"O, my dear young lady, I dare not tell you! You would be angry with your poor Murray if she told you the cause of her being in this state."

"Why should I be angry, Murray? You surely can have committed no crime, or been guilty of any action that needs concealment, or that could account for your present state of agitation."

"No, miss, God be thanked! *I* have committed no crime; but there are those whose consciences are not so clear, and that's what is breaking my heart;" and the sobs of the old woman impeded her utterance.

"But why should you conceal crime or guilt, Murray? On the contrary, it's your duty to reveal it."

"Ah! so I have said to myself twenty times to-day, miss; and yet I'm afraid to tell what I know—afraid, miss, that your mother, that you yourself maybap, my dear young lady—you, for whom I would willingly lay down my life, would be angry with me."

"All this is quite incomprehensible to me, Murray. You say that there is crime somewhere—that you know it—and yet you assert your dread that its being revealed would incur the displeasure of my mother and me. What does—what *can* all this mystery mean? If it be anything my mother and I ought to know, let me

hear it at once?" said Miss Sydney, in the full belief that the disclosure she wished to elicit related solely to one of the servants in the establishment.

"Well, my dear young lady, as you command me to tell it, I will; but if what I have to say should incur your anger, and I greatly fear it will, remember you commanded me to tell it. Oh, Miss Sydney, how, can I help being miserable and almost heart-broken, when I know that you are going to be married to one who..."

"Hold, Murray," said the young lady, her face becoming flushed with displeasure; "presume not to attach such words as crime or guilt to Mr. Strathern. Think not that because I once, in a moment of weakness and excitement, listened to vague insinuations against one whose name ought to be sacred with those who love me, I will ever again permit it. I am sorry, Murray, that you should force me to censure you for indulging in a propensity to gossip, and I must positively interdict even the least reference to this painful subject again."

The dignity of Miss Sydney's bearing, and the sternness with which she uttered the rebuke, so unlike the softness and kindness of manner to which she had been accustomed in her young mistress, produced so strong an effect on the old nurse's feelings, that, quite overcome, she wept bitterly in uncontrollable emotion, and, though much displeased, Miss Sydney, touched by the violence of her grief, had pity on her.

"Indeed, it was because I—I love you—better than everything on ea—rth," sobbed Murray; "bet—ter than life itself; that I thought it—it my duty to wa—r—n you,—and now—I have incur—red your anger. Oh! my poor old heart—will— break!"

Miss Sydney poured out a glass of water, and persuaded the old woman to swallow it, but her sobs still continued, proving the depth of her emotion at the unwonted reproof of her young mistress.

"Oh! I see you are deeply offended with me, Miss Sydney; and yet Heaven knows that, could you but read my heart, you would be convinced that it was no idle curiosity, but a real affection for you, that led me to inquire into what Mrs. Bloxham knew against Mr. Strathern. Forgive me, if I have done wrong. Do, my own dear lady, and be assured it was well meant."

"I pardon you this time, Murray, but on one condition, and that is, that you will never more make Mr. Strathern the subject of

your conversation with Mrs. Bloxham, or any one else, and that you refer to the suspicions infused into your mind by the absurd insinuations of that person no more. Were my mother to know that you had ever done so, she would be so seriously offended that I do not think she would forgive you so readily as I have done; but I do so the more willingly because I am conscious that my weakness in listening to you on this subject on a former occasion encouraged you to persevere in it. Dry your eyes and compose yourself. I am quite convinced you meant well in all this business; but you must remember, my good Murray, that no motive, however good, will justify your prying into the affairs, or questioning the reputation of others, or encouraging mischievous gossip about them."

Murray was silent, but not convinced by the reproof or reflections of her young lady. She loved her so fondly, so devotedly, that she could not bring herself to think that there was any impropriety in her endeavouring to ascertain the meaning of the hints and ominous shakes of the head of Mrs. Bloxham, when they referred to so important a point as the character of him on whom the future happiness of the person dearest to her on earth was to depend. But, though unconvinced on this head, she saw that her young mistress's good will could only be retained by a strict adherence to the conditions laid down by her, and consequently she determined not to violate them. "Oh!" and the nurse heaved a deep sigh as she uttered the exclamation, "how much in love must my poor dear young lady be, when she won't listen to a word against Mr. Strathern! Woe's me! I wish she had never set eyes on him, for he surely has bewitched her."

Although Louisa Sydney had acted with such firmness and propriety on this occasion as to impress her old attendant with a very exalted opinion, if not of her strength of mind or dignity, at least of her full and entire confidence in her lover, truth compels us to declare that, while reproving the nurse, she felt the most longing desire to be made acquainted with all that she had learned from the gossiping Mrs. Bloxham. The tears and agitation of Murray indicated that the information she had received must have been, indeed, of a most painful and disagreeable nature, and this thought filled the breast of Miss Sydney with a thousand vague yet disquieting suspicions, which she longed to have refuted, or to combat, by her own reasoning powers, against the prejudices and credulity of the old nurse. A feeling of what was due to her lover had induced her

to be thus peremptory in checking the disclosures Murray was on the point of making; but this sacrifice had been made at the expense of her own feelings, for the pangs of jealousy awakened in her heart made her experience the most longing desire to learn whether indeed she had any just cause for their existence. That Strathern loved her, and her only at present, she was little disposed to doubt, for his every word and look bore this blessed conviction to her mind; but, like many others of the youthful and inexperienced of her sex whose affections have been awakened for the first time, this certitude of the present devotion of her lover was not sufficient to satisfy the fastidious and *exigeante* Louisa Sydney, who was painfully alive to a jealousy of the past. All suspicions of Strathern's being influenced by mercenary motives in seeking her hand had vanished from her mind. There was an elevation and nobleness in his sentiments which every day's acquaintance revealed, that precluded her from doubting him on this point; but still the fear that he had previously loved, and loved unworthily, once infused into her breast, haunted her continually, and poisoned the happiness which, without this alloy to it, would have been indeed as perfect as was ever allowed to one of earth's daughters.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

What sacrifices have been made for gold
By sage and moralist have oft been told,
When blooming youth, with step that scarce doth falter,
To mate with hoary age will seek the altar,
And offer up, O Hymen, at thy shrine
False vows, forgetful of the wrath divine!
See wit with folly, erudition rare,
With ignorance consent for wealth to pair,
And noble blood descend for this to wive
The coarsest, plainest, vulgar shrew alive:
All this—nay, more—can gold make mortals do,
Reckless the heavy ills that may ensue.

We left Lord Alexander Beaulieu going to pay his first visit, since his assumed indisposition, to Mrs. Maclaurin, who received him with every demonstration of the delight which she *naïvely* assured him his presence afforded her, demonstrations which, though flat-

tering to his vanity, rather disgusted than gratified him. Lord Alexander Beaulieu, like many of his order, possessed a fastidiousness of taste, joined to a laxity of moral principle, that accorded very ill together; for while the first rendered aught approaching to coarseness or vulgarity odious to him, the second continually exposed him to both, in the associates it threw in his way. He recoiled with ill-concealed distaste from the exuberant proofs of pleasure which his visit occasioned Mrs. Maclaurin, while she, wholly destitute of tact, observed not his coldness.

"Oh! then, isn't it myself that's glad to see you! Sure I thought you'd never leave your room, the time appeared so long to me. And to be so near to you, too, without being able to see you, made me quite angry. Indeed, I often said to myself how unlucky it was we were not married before you got ill, for then I could be with you, and that would be a great comfort to you, wouldn't it?"

Lord Alexander Beaulieu almost groaned at the notion, but smiled blandly as he said. "Certainly that would have rendered my confinement to a sick chamber much less irksome."

"Indeed, and you arn't half as much changed as I expected, my lord. You look mighty well. I dare say you see a great alteration in me, for I have fretted so much at your illness that I couldn't eat, drink, or sleep—" an assertion which, as far as regarded the two first parts of it, Mrs. Bernard could have contradicted; and to the want of veracity of the third Mademoiselle Justine could have borne ample testimony, as she had told Darnford that the loud and continued snoring of her mistress, to whose bedchamber hers was adjacent, awoke her several times in the night.

"Yes, had we been married, my charming friend, I could have better borne my late seclusion," said Lord Alexander: "as I hope that, lest another attack should occur, you will abridge the tedious period of my probation, and allow me to call you mine?"

Lord Alexander tried to look tender, and to throw as much *empressement* as possible into his manner, but any one less obtuse than Mrs. Maclaurin could not have failed to discover how much the effort cost him, and how ill he performed the *rôle* of a lover.

"Ah! now, my lord, don't be too hard on me. I leave it to your own honour whether it would be right or decent for me to marry you when we have only been so short a time acquainted. What would people say?"

"Why should we care for what they may say, my sweet friend? I love you, and you do me the honour of saying you do not hate me."

"Hate you! Quite the contrary; I never liked any man half so well before," and the lady endeavoured to call up a blush, and look modest, in both which attempts truth compels us to acknowledge she was very unsuccessful.

"Well, then, dearest of women, if you really like me, why should you retard my happiness? Why not"—and he took her coarse red hand in his with an involuntary shudder as he felt its size and texture—"be generous, and superior to idle ceremony in at once yielding me this dear hand."

"Oh! your lordship knows your power over my poor weak heart, and that I haven't the courage to refuse you anything," and she hid her face in her handkerchief.

"Then you will be mine, my lovely creature, without any more cruel delays. You will at once let me lead you to the hymeneal altar."

"Where is that, my lord? Somewhere at Rome, I suppose, and yet it can't be, neither, for my dam de company told me yesterday, when I was questioning her, that a Protestant could not be married at Rome."

Tempted as Lord Alexander Beaulieu was to laugh at this *naïve* proof of the gross ignorance of his *fiancée*, he nevertheless restrained his risible muscles, and said, "It is true we cannot be wedded here, but we can go on to Naples, and there, at the English minister's, we can be united."

"But wouldn't it be better to be married openly at church, my lord? I should prefer it."

"In Italy this would be impracticable, my fair friend, unless we were both of the Roman Catholic persuasion."

"Oh! if that's the case, I'll do as your lordship wishes; but I hope you'll take care to send the news of the wedding to all the English newspapers. How mad it will make some of my acquaintances to find that, after all, I have married a lord! Oh, dear! how delightful it is to think how angry and envious they will be!"

"Had we not better make our arrangements to proceed to Naples with as little delay as possible, there to have the nuptial ceremony performed?"

"Lauk! if your lordship doesn't make me feel quite ashamed," and Mrs. Maclaurin held down her head, and now really blushed.

"Charming modesty!" exclaimed Lord Alexander Beaulieu.

"Oh, my lord! poor dear Mr. Maclaurin was quite a different sort of person from your lordship. *He* never talked of *nup shall*

nor of *nap will*, poor man, nor ever made me blush in his life. *He* was just for all the world as if he was my father in regard to that, though he left me his great fortin."

"He was a happy man to have had so charming a wife."

"Well, now, would you believe it, I don't think he ever so much as looked in my face. All he required was for me to sing to him every evening till he fell asleep, so you see I gave him *raisins* for leaving me nearly two *plums*. Now isn't that a good joke of mine? Ha, ha, ha! I used to say to him, 'You and I, sir, exchange notes. I give you *my* notes for your bank ones;' but he never laughed a bit at my jokes, not he, and that used to affront me sometimes."

"I see that you unite wit with all your other attractions, my lovely widow. How I long to call you Lady Alexander Beaulieu!"

"And, indeed, lauk knows I long to hear myself called so. 'Lady Alexander!' it sounds quite like Alexander the Great."

"I wish I could give you a higher title, my charmer."

"Oh! sure this is quite good enough, my lord; and in return I'll show your lordship that I won't be behind you in generosity, for I'll give you half my fortin, ay, settle it on your lordship when we go back to England."

"Lovely creature, who could bestow a thought on money when you are in question?"

"Indeed, and if I had twice as much, I'd give you the half, share and share alike."

"Your delicacy of sentiment overpowers me," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, and, rising from his chair, he encircled Mrs. Maclaurin's clumsy waist with his arms, and, not without a struggle on her part, imprinted a kiss on her cheek.

"I wrote home the day you first spoke about marriage to me, to have an exact statement of my fortin sent out to me, to shew your lordship."

"It is yourself, and not your fortune, I seek, my charming creature, and if I have ever bestowed a thought on it, it was because, being only a younger brother, and like all *cadets de famille*, not over-rich, I have not the means of supporting you in that style of splendour and elegance to which your personal and mental qualities entitle you. I can only give you rank, and a distinguished place in society."

"And sure what more do I want? Haven't I got plenty of money for both of us? But I hope you won't be obliged to go to Hindia. I suffer terribly from say-sickness, and thought I'd die when I was

crossing over from Dublin to Holyhead, so you may judge what it would be if you were to take me to Hindia, and I surely wouldn't let you go there without me."

"I have not the slightest intention of going to India. Such an idea never entered my head."

"But how can you help it when you are a cadet? I knew a gentleman, a friend of Colonel Fairfax, who was a cadet, and he was obliged to go to Hindia; and as you told me you were a cadet, I supposed you'd be also compelled to go there."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu now recollected having used the term *cadet de famille*, which led to Mrs. Maclaurin's mistake, and he could not repress a smile at her ignorance of the signification of so common an expression, while he explained to her what it meant.

"Well, I wish I knew French; but I hope I soon will, for my maid is a French woman, and I'll get her to teach me. Justin—that is her name, though I often tell her she is *just out*, when she doesn't understand what I say to her—is a mighty clever genteel girl, and dresses me very elegantly, doesn't she?"

"I admire you so excessively, that I never look at your dress," was the reply of the artful Lord Alexander; and this flattery was repaid by a most tender glance from the languishing widow.

"Do you know any of the nobility at Naples?" demanded she, after a few minutes' pause.

"I dare say I shall find some of my acquaintances there."

"The reason I asked was, that I'd like to be married just as all the great ladies in London are, with titled ladies for my bridesmaids, all dressed elegantly, with white and silver favours; and I intend to wear a dress of Brussels point-lace over white satin, and a veil of the same, and a wreath of orange flowers—won't it be beautiful? Justin has been trying to persuade me that widows ought not to wear orange flowers when they remarry, but I told her that when a woman marries an old man who might be her grandfather, such a marriage may go for just nothing at all, and when he dies and she marries a young man she may well wear orange flowers."

"Marriages celebrated out of England are never attended by the ceremonies and splendour that accompany them there. Persons about to be united go to the English ambassador's or minister's house, with a few friends, and in simple morning costumes, where the ceremony is performed."

"What! are there no bridesmaids, no elegant wedding favours, no splendid breakfast, after, just as one reads of in the *Morning Post*, under the head of 'Marriage in High Life?'"

"No, my charming friend, there is nothing of all this."

"Oh! that is a pity. Why, it's just like not being married at all;" and Mrs. Maclaurin's countenance betrayed her disappointment.

"It is only in England that I can secure for you, my angel, the advantages to which your rank, as my wife, will entitle you. While we remain on the Continent, you must be content, like all the rest of the English nobility, to lay by the appendages of aristocracy."

Mrs. Maclaurin was silent for a few minutes, her mind evidently revolving some serious question; and, as Lord Alexander Beaulieu contemplated her plain and vulgar face, and her clumsy, ungraceful, and overdressed person, he almost wondered how he had been so far able to conquer the disgust which both were so well calculated to excite as to touch her cheeks with his lips. Seldom had the demon of avarice achieved a greater conquest over a needy man of fashion than on this occasion, and his victim was ready to acknowledge it as he turned with a sense of loathing from his future wife.

"I have been thinking, my lord," said that lady, "that it would be as well to postpone our marriage until we return to London, and we can go back as soon as we like. I have seen quite enough of foreign parts, and wouldn't object to leave Italy to-morrow, for the matter of that."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was somewhat startled by this unexpected proposal, and by no means disposed to acquiesce in it. He had many good reasons, in the shape of sundry long bills, "more honoured in the breach than in the observance," for not wishing to show himself in London until his marriage had secured to him the power of making an arrangement with his creditors, and, however closely that event might follow his arrival there, he had a presentiment that it would be unsafe for him to appear there before it. He felt that it would be unwise to let his future wife into this secret, yet something must be said to avert her carrying into execution the measure she had projected. Skilled in every wily art, he quickly formed his plan, and as rapidly commenced putting it into practice. He called up a look in which wounded pride and disappointed affection strove for mastery, and said, "Is it possible,

madam, that you can thus trifle with my feelings? that you can coldly propose to postpone the happiness for which I pant? Have I been deceived, and, while I believed you as anxious as myself for our union, can you indeed propose to defer it?"

"Sure it's only for so short a time. It wouldn't make the difference of more than three weeks or a month."

"Three weeks or a month!—cruel woman! But I see you do not love me? if you did, you would not, you *could* not, think of prolonging my misery. What but my anxiety to call you mine has produced my late illness? and yet you...."

"Oh, bless me, my lord, don't, pray don't take on so. Sure, if I thought 'twould have hurt you so much, I wouldn't, for any consideration, have said a word about the matter; but, the truth is, that when I found that weddings in Italy are so mean like, and not at all elegant as they are in London, I just thought that we might as well put off ours until we got back; but, rather than you should be displeased, I will make up my mind to be married at Naples."

"You are so cold, so indifferent, so wholly unlike what I expected to find you on this occasion," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "that I hardly know whether I ought to accept your hand," and he looked grave and offended.

"Sure, you wouldn't be after refusing me, would you?" and the clumsy creature sidled up to her *soi-disant enamorato*, and, trying to look archly in his face, took his hand, and held it between her coarse red ones.

"If I thought that you didn't love me as I desire to be loved, fondly as I am attached to you, I would resign this"—fair he tried to say; but he could not, as his eye fell on it, bring out the word, so he finished the sentence, by adding, "hand."

"But why should you doubt it? Do you think, if you were ten times a lord—ay, by my troth, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who is always the greatest of lords, into the bargain—I'd marry you if I didn't like and love you better than all mankind! Not I, troth, I can tell you. What's the use of having a great fortin if one can't please oneself in a husband, I should like to know?—and so I often told them that used to come a courting to me at Brighton and other places."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu found it difficult to conceal his disgust while his future bride was making this speech, which she rendered still more emphatic by her gestures, which, always vulgar and ungraceful, became doubly so when she was animated and earnest.

"I see you're jealous, my lord, at my mentioning about them smart dandies that used to be trying to please me in England; but, faith, you needn't, for I didn't care a straw for any of 'em. Come, don't look gloomy. I'm ready and willing to marry you when and where you like; and you may take it as a sure proof of my affection, when I consent to be married in a country where there's no bridesmaids, nor elegant dresses worn at weddings—where, in fact, it's almost like not being married at all."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu took her hand, and said, "I am, I must be satisfied, my lovely friend; for to doubt your attachment would make me wretched. Let us then arrange to proceed to Naples next week, where this fair hand shall become mine, and then I shall have no wish ungratified."

"I have been thinking, that now we're to be married so soon, and that you'll always be with me, I won't have any occasion for my dam de company, and, therefore, I'll send her off at once, and not be bothered taking her with me to Naples. By sending her away, you and I can travel together very comfortably there."

"My dear creature, that must not be. My travelling with you alone before we are wedded would give rise to a thousand malicious reports, which could not fail to be injurious to your future position as Lady Alexander Beaulieu. It would look ill for you to travel without a female companion, or to be unaccompanied by one when we go to the English minister's to have the marriage ceremony performed. Let Mrs. Bernard, therefore, remain with you, at least until we are wedded, and then you can dismiss her if you please."

"Is Naples a sayport?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin, not the least abashed at thus displaying her total ignorance of geography.

"Yes, it is."

"Then I'll ship her off in the first vessel that sails for England, that's what I'll do, and that will save a deal of money, for though I have plenty, I don't see the good of throwing it away."

This fresh proof of her hardness of heart and utter selfishness disgusted her future husband as much as if *he* were wholly exempt from these odious failings, so prone are men to forget their own defect when censuring those of others.

"Oh! how stupid it is of me to have forgotten," said Mrs. Maclaurin, and she opened a silver casket on her table, and drew from it a small *écrin*. "Look here what I have got for you!" and she held up three large diamond stars. "Aren't they beautiful? They'll

look beautiful in your *chimey*. And here is a pin, just the same, to wear when you have a black cravat."

"I am quite shocked that you should have taken this trouble; they are very beautiful, but I never wear trinkets, as you may observe."

"Yes, I noticed that, but I naturally thought it was because you were a younger son; and as you told me younger sons were seldom rich, I fancied that, perhaps, you could not afford to buy handsome studs or pins, for I can't think that any who could have them would go without."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu's cheek crimsoned as he listened to the *parvenue's* remarks, but he only noticed them by saying, that very few of the persons most distinguished for good taste in the circle in which he moved were in the habit of wearing expensive ornaments.

"How very odd! Well, for my part, I'm of the old opinion, that fine feathers make fine birds, and lords and ladies look no grander than other people, unless they wear fine things. If I was the Queen, I'd always wear my crown on my head, except when I wanted to put on my night-cap, and lords and ladies ought, I think, always to put on their coronets when they take off their hats and bonnets. But you'll not offend me by refusing to take these diamonds? Do accept and wear 'em for my sake. They are three very fine ones that I bought in London to wear as studs in my habit-shirt, and I gave two hundred guineas ready money, for I always pay ready money, for them."

"I really cannot think of depriving you of them," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, with an air of *hauteur*.

"You do not deprive me at all, for I really seldom wear 'em; and, besides, if I did, sure won't we be soon married, and then 'twill be just the same as if they were mine still, for I can wear 'em when I like."

"Well, then, when we are married I will accept them, my sweet friend, but not before;" and Lord Alexander, with a feeling more akin to noble blood than might, after his recent conduct, be suspected to rest in his sullied breast, placed the presents designed for him on the table, with so stately an air that even the obtuse and vulgar Mrs. Maclaurin was ready to acknowledge in her secret thoughts that there was something different in real lords, as she loved to term them, and the men she had hitherto been accustomed to associate with, though she could not precisely comprehend in what the difference consisted.

"Now, there's them smart dandies that used to visit me in London and Brighton," thought she to herself, "and who used to be so elegantly dressed, how *they'd* have jumped with joy to receive such gifts! and yet his lordship positively seemed more depressed to be offended than pleased when I offered fifty to him. May be he thought they were not large enough or grand enough. Oh! these lords are so high and proud. Sometimes when I am talking quite pleasantly to him, Lord Alexander will draw himself up so very stately, just as he did when I said that I thought he did not wear diamond buttons, because, as a younger brother, he might not be able to afford it. I must mind my P's and Q's with him when we are married, or he'll be for taking offence when I do not dream of giving any."

"I must now leave you," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, rising to depart.

"Sure, now that you are so much better, you will dine with me won't you?" and Mrs. Maclaurin laid her large red hand on his arm, and looked up entreatingly in his face.

"I am not yet quite well enough to be able to sit up all the evening."

"Sure, can't you lay down on the sofa after dinner without ceremony, just as you would in your own room?"

"I could not think of making such a solecism in good breeding in the presence of a lady, so you must really excuse me."

"Well, I must say, I think it is not very kind of you to refuse dining with me, now that everything is settled for our marriage," and Mrs. Maclaurin's countenance, never a very agreeable one, assumed an expression of extreme ill-humour, as she uttered what she meant as a reproof. "It's easy to see, after all you have said to the contrary, that you do not take as much pleasure in my company as you ought, considering we are in our courting day, and if that's the case, maybe 'twould be as well not to marry at all, for what do people marry for but to be always together, for better for worse, as the parson says."

Her face grew so red, and her eyes glanced forth such flashes of anger, that no one but Lord Alexander would have provoked her into greater ire by persisting in a refusal to comply with her wishes.

"Can you for a moment doubt, my dear creature," said he, "how much happier I must always feel near you than anywhere else in the world? and if I hesitated to accept your invitation at once, it was

because I feared to bore you in my present weak state, when my spirits are hardly equal to the excitement of your charming society."

"Well, then, you'll come, won't you? There's a good man." And she held out her hand in token of restored amity.

"I can deny no wish of yours, my charming friend; so if you find me a very dull and tiresome companion, you must no blame me, but yourself, for having drawn on you such an infliction. I will now take my leave, and return to dine with you. Adieu, *au revoir*.

"Ajew, my dear lord, ajew." And her countenance brightening up at having carried her point with her future husband, she smiled most graciously on him.

When the door closed, the words "Hateful, odious Gorgon!" were muttered between the half-shut teeth of Alexander Beaulieu, as he proceeded to his own apartment; while Mrs. Maclaurin, having looked for a few minutes in the glass, and arranged her hair, exclaimed, "Well, I don't know how it is, but somehow or other it often crosses my mind, that he doesn't really love me after all, he is so cool, and different to other men when they are going to be married, but I suppose this is the way that lords always behave."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

He who of servants tools will make,
Will find that liberties they'll take;
And, howsoever bad they be,
Will, with contempt, *his* baseness see,
And scorn him for the treach'rous art
With which he tries to act a part;
While they, more dexterous in deceit,
Deride him whom uncheck'd they cheat.

Never did man enter his chamber in a worse humour than did Lord Alexander Beaulieu on leaving that of Mrs. Maclaurin. Every interview with her increased his dislike, and the *exigence* she had exhibited in exacting his presence that day, so far from flattering his vanity as a proof of her attachment, only served to add to his disgust towards her, as he viewed it as an earnest of what he might

expect at her hands when he was married. He threw himself into a *bergère*, and cursed the poverty which compelled him to seek so hateful and humiliating an alliance, and execrated her by whose means he was to obtain that wealth which he had so long and ardently desired. "Oh! the misery of being compelled to conceal dislike," thought Lord Alexander, "and to enact the lover while the heart loathes the object to whom this court is made!"

This new proof of the *exigence* and despotism of Mrs. Maclaurin, so lately revealed, while it increased his disgust to her, gave him little alarm for the future, he being fully determined to carry everything his own way, and to let her soon see that he would be master, *coûte que coûte*, of his own actions. Nevertheless, the thought of the opposition he should meet with to accomplish his point, and the vulgar turbulence to be encountered in a contest with this ill-brought-up and coarse-minded woman, would intrude to vex and sour him, and he writhed under the infliction he was about to entail on himself, without either desiring to abandon the alliance he had sought, or to contemn the baseness that instigated him in the pursuit. No; wealth was the sole, the sovereign good he sighed for, and to attain it, he would stifle every reproach, vanquish every repugnance.

"Ye Gods!" exclaimed he, "what will Mount Serrat—the proud, fastidious Mount Serrat—say to me when I present to him his new sister-in-law? I fancy I see his face of horror and amazement when he hears her Hibernian brogue and extraordinary dialect. He may, however, blame himself; for had this same brother of mine paid my debts the last time, I should not have been driven from London, and there I might have made a more creditable marriage."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu was forgetful that his brother had already twice paid his debts, amounting to a very large sum each time; but so it ever is with the improvident spendthrift, who soon becomes unmindful of past acts of generosity and kindness, however munificent they may have been, if a continuance of them is withheld, and ingratitude is with him the sure follower of benefits received. "Well, I shall soon be wholly independent of Mount Serrat, and that will be a great comfort," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu. "I need no more be bored with his grave lectures and advice, and, Heaven knows, he is by no means sparing of either! Were he but half so liberal with his money, I should not now be on the point of marriage with this odious Irishwoman."

The entrance of Durnford interrupted the meditations of his master. "Have you heard any news?" demanded he.

"Yes, my lord, and a pretty deal of trouble and expense into the bargain it has cost me—the trouble at least to me—and the expense to your lordship."

"I don't comprehend you."

"O, my lord! you don't know what these ladies'-maids and housekeepers are. There's no getting a word of intelligence out of them without flattery and presents. Why—would you believe it, my lord?—I had to treat Mrs. Bloxham with six bottles of Madeira—and a pretty price they ask for it at Rome, too—before she'd say a word, ay, and a plum cake from the English confectioner's, and very dear *he* is in his charges, I must say."

Durnford, a clever fellow in his way, by no means burthened with honesty, or scrupulousness in point of veracity, missed no opportunity of profiting by his master's folly or schemes. He insisted on receiving a per centage of twenty-five per cent. for every article furnished for Lord Alexander Beaulieu's use, and consequently took care always to order double what that nobleman required. When employed to discover intelligence from the servants of others, as in the case of Mrs. Bloxham, although he found that class invariably disposed to freely communicate to him all that they knew, or suspected, he made his master believe that it was only by bribes judiciously applied that he could extract news from them; hence the entries in his account-book of sundry presents in the shapes of half-dozens of wine, gold rings, French shawls, never bestowed, drew considerable sums from the purse of Lord Alexander, who could but ill afford the imposition practised on him. To prepare his master for these same entries, he would with a long face deplore the extravagant charges of the trades-people at whose shops he alleged the bribes were purchased, well aware that the truth was little likely to reach the ears of his employer.

"Well, what did Mrs. Bloxham tell you?" demanded Lord Alexander.

"Why, my lord, she told me as how Miss Sydney and Mr. Strathern were better friends than ever; that Mr. Strathern is never out of Mrs. Sydney's house, and that they are all as happy as possible."

This was too much for Lord Alexander Beaulieu to hear unmoved, and more particularlarly when his nerves were all ajar, as they always were after a visit to Mrs. Maclaurin. "Psha!" exclaimed

he, "and is this all the intelligence you obtained? I think it was hardly worth while to bribe Mrs. Boxham so highly. One bottle of Madeira, instead of six, might have sufficed."

"Your lordship hasn't a notion of the difficulty of managing these sort of women. If I were to offer her a single bottle of wine, she would be so affronted that probably I should never again be admitted into the house. I told her that Mr. Strathern was a sad rake, and would be sure to make Miss Sydney a miserable woman, every word of which she will be sure to repeat to Mrs. Murray when they next meet, and the old nurse, who is allowed to talk to Miss Sydney more as a friend than a servant, will be sure to tell it to her young mistress."

"I hope that may produce some effect, but I almost doubt it."

"I have also seen Ma'mselle Justine, who has always a thousand questions to ask about your lordship. She is as sharp as a needle, finds out everything by hook or by crook, and is not at all shy in asking for presents. When I try to get out of giving them, she says, 'Oh! I suppose your master is an *avare*;' and then she adds, that she will never let *her* mistress marry one who is not generous. The courier tells me that Mrs. Maclaurin is entirely governed by Ma'mselle Justine, who can make her do just what she pleases; so, in regard of your lordship's interest, I'm obliged to keep good friends with her, and this can only be done by giving her cake and wine and cherry brandy when she comes here. This costs a mint of money, and it goes to my heart to see your lordship put to such expense....."

"Which you might have saved if you had followed my advice, and paid your addresses to her—in fact, bribed her with flattery, instead of wine and cakes."

"Really, my lord, I *have* a principle; and I couldn't bear to marry a woman who hadn't one also, and who hadn't the fear of God before her eyes;" and Durnford looked grave and sanctimonious.

"Well, I must marry soon, Durnford, or I shall be ruined by your system of bribery—that's clear, for your book swallows up more of my money than my own *menus plaisirs* do."

"Why, as to treating Ma'mselle Justine, it really is money well laid out, my lord, for, as she governs her mistress, and, as she tells me, can make her believe that black is white, and *vice versâ*, she might make her break off the marriage, if she took it into her head. And she might do so if she thought your lordship wasn't as gene-

rous as a prince, as I always tell her you are. She has the finest place, she admits, of any lady's-maid in all Rome, higher wages, greater presents and perquisites, and a fine per centage on everything her mistress buys, so it's no wonder she doesn't much like the thought of Mrs. Maclaurin's marrying, unless she was sure that your lordship wouldn't spoil her profits; so 'tis to prevent her thinking there is any chance of this that I put your lordship to such a heavy expense for her."

"You may leave me now, Durnford, and come back in time for me to dress for dinner, as I dine at Mrs. Maclaurin's."

"It's a pity your lordship didn't let me know in time, that I might have countermanded your dinner. I can't bear to see your lordship's money thrown away," and off walked Durnford, determined to devour the said dinner himself, and so save his board wages. There were moments when Lord Alexander Beaulieu felt conscious of the mean and base part he was enacting, and almost blushed before his own servant. It is true, this consciousness, humiliating and painful as it was, produced no change in his conduct, for it amounted not to remorse for the past, and led to no desire for amendment in the future. Its effects were a sourness of temper, and irritability of nerves, that rendered him far from agreeable to others, while he was under its influence, and a burden to himself. In such a humour was he when he dismissed Durnford; and as he ensconced his person in the *bergère*, into which he had thrown himself on entering the room, he felt disposed to quarrel with all the world, and never stood lower in his own estimation.

"I am a cup too low," thought he, "and shall never be able to get through the evening with that most odious of all women without a glass of *curaçoa* to put me in spirits."

He rang the bell, and desired Durnford to bring the liqueur.

"There's none in the *armoire*, my lord; I gave the very last glass to Ma'mselle Justine yesterday."

"I wish Ma'mselle Justine was"—at the devil he was about to say, but remembering the old proverb that "walls have ears," and by no means disposed that Ma'mselle Justine should suspect that he disliked her, he checked the sentence, and added—"was less partial to *curaçoa*. Go and get me some, and, in future, do not touch mine for any one else."

Durnford went off to procure the liqueur, smiling at the credulity
ster, and the facility he found in deceiving him, whil

Mamselle Justine got the credit of having drank that which she had not even tasted, as Durnford's tale of having made her the presents which he entered in his master's book was as false as his statements relative to similar gifts made to Mrs. Bloxham.

"I must soon dismiss this artful Frenchwoman," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "for while she remains with her foolish mistress, all attempts to curb her extravagance will be vain. What a woman! what a woman! Such is the disgust with which she inspires me, that even now, were I not reduced to my last hundred, and know not where to find another, I would break off this odious marriage."

The entrance of Durnford with the *curaçoa* interrupted the trite reflections of the master. He swallowed two bumpers of it, and then, somewhat exhilarated by its effects, resumed his meditations.

"And so, after all," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "the trouble I have taken, and at some risk to myself too, to cause an irreparable breach between Strathern and that girl, and making myself a prisoner for so many days, I find that my schemes are defeated, and that they are as loving as two turtle-doves, billing and cooing together. Curse them! curse them!" and his brow became clouded, and his countenance assumed a fiend-like expression, as he uttered his imprecations. "How I hate and loathe them both! And to think that, while I am wretched and self-abased, dragging out the tedious hours in painful reflections, or—worse still, infinitely worse—in the society of the abominable Gorgon I am about to marry, they are happy in the enjoyment of each other's society and in a good understanding, which all my schemes and efforts have been unable to interrupt. I thought I knew that girl better. Her pride and disposition towards suspicion I had often noted. Who then could have foreseen that she would have been proof against the plan I devised for turning her against Strathern? And on him, too, my letter has produced no effect. I could better support the annoyances of my own position had I the consolation of knowing that they were unhappy, but to hear that they are fonder than ever, and perfectly well united, maddens me.

"Well, well, there is no use in thinking of all this, and yet I cannot drive it from my mind. It haunts me continually, and so sours and irritates my temper, that I find it a difficult task to restrain its ebullitions when provoked by the folly of that stupid and ignorant creature I am about to wed. Had I not lost at play three

hundred of the five I won by my wager with Fitzwarren, I might have temporized a few weeks longer before I tied the irrevocable knot that will bind me for ever to that quintessence of vulgarity. What a madman I was to play when my means were so cramped! —but I was urged on by the hope of winning a sufficient sum to keep me afloat for some time, and here again my evil destiny pursued me. Had that good-natured blockhead, Fitzwarren, remained here, I might count on his assistance for the loan of a few hundreds, but he—Devil take him!—has chosen to set off, and I don't know a single man at Rome to whom I should like to apply in an emergency, or from whom, if I did, I should have much chance of receiving assistance. Nothing, then, remains but to marry this odious woman, and that as soon as it can be accomplished. I must swallow this bitter pill as children do physic, by shutting my eyes and gulping it down, and think only of the pleasures her wealth can enable me to plunge into as a consolation for such a *mésalliance*."

Such were the reflections that passed through the mind of Lord Alexander Beaulieu as he reclined in an easy chair, until Durnford came to inform him that it was time to dress for dinner, and never did he perform the duties of the toilette with so little interest in their result.

"Bah!" thought he, as he looked at his mirror, "what avails it to look well? A lord, in any dress, would be sure to be acceptable to that *parvenue*, who is a respecter, not of persons, but of titles. And well it is that we younger brothers, who seldom have anything else to hold out as baits to catch riches, have this one. Without it, how many poor devils, like myself, would be now on the *pavé*, instead of having found wives, if not of great merit, at least of great price, which is the essential in the matrimonial market!"

"I think my master's purse is getting rather seedy," thought Durnford, when Lord Alexander Beaulieu withdrew to keep his dinner engagement with Mrs. Maclaurin. "He has not been in high spirits of late; a sure sign that his finances are low, as I have often remarked. Well, a good portion of his late supplies has found its way into my coffers, where it shall be safely kept, instead of being squandered all over Rome, as it would have been by him, had I not laid an embargo on it. They call my lord a sharp and clever fellow—ha! ha! ha! the notion of it makes me laugh. Why, I can cheat him as easy as if he were a child, and without his ever so much as suspecting it either: and yet I am no sharper nor cleverer

than many other valets, and not so much so as some, who, in my place, wouldn't leave him a guinea. But all the haristocracy are so. *They* know nothing of life; are not up to anything, with all their hedication; and a poor servant, who has merely picked up enough of learning to scribble down false entries in his book and tot up the amount, can impose on them as much as he likes. And sarve 'em right, too; for what do they know of the vally of money? Do *they* understand the fair prices of anything they wear, eat, or drink? Not at all. They haven't the gumption even to inquire, and must take for granted what we choose to tell them. It's only fair that we poor servants should have our perquisites, as well as tailors, hatters, bootmakers, and all the rest of those that are employed by our masters, and, if we hadn't, *they* would be none the richer, for every one has a pull on 'em one way or another, which is the reason so many of 'em get ruined before they know where they are. The truth is, noblemen are so extravagant – can't deny themselves anything while they have money or credit to procure it—they're sure to be done up, even if *we* didn't make a guinea by them: therefore, it's but right that we should have our share of the plunder when it's going on at every side.

"I wonder what makes my lord meddle with Mr. Strathern's love affair with Miss Sydney, now that he's going to be married himself? How he changed colour when I told him that Mr. Strathern was always at Mrs. Sydney's, and that the young lady and he were fonder of each other than ever! He can't be jealous, can he? Yet there must be some reason for his looking so vexed. I'll find it out, though, for it's my hopinion that *we* have as much right to our master's secrets as to their cast clothes. Well, he'll have a precious wife in this Hirish woman. Ma'mselle Justine tells me she's the biggest fool in the whole world—thinks of nothing but eating, drinking, and dressing, and that *she* can, by a little flattery, make her believe, or do anything. My heyes! what a table we'll keep when she comes to rule the roast! I'll not spend a farthing of my board-wages, that I won't; and I'll swell up the bills—won't I! Justine is a clever gal, I must say; and, though not a reglar beauty, there's a *jenny si quoy*, as the French say, about her that is very engaging. But she has a temper of her own, I'm afraid, and will be wanting to take her own way, and that will not be quite so pleasant. *Cinety gal*, as she says herself, I'll soon bring her to reason, by fair means or foul, that I can tell her."

So reasoned the respectable Mr. Durnford, as he arranged the

dressing-table, and put in order the room of his master, giving a voice to his reflections, as was his wont when alone, and sure that they were not likely to be overheard by any listeners, a security which his knowledge that no English person was within reach of sound gave him. He then sate down to enjoy the luxurious repast prepared for Lord Alexander Beaulieu, which having washed down with a bottle of claret to be charged to the account of his lordship, he sallied forth to pay his evening visit to Ma'mselle Justine, whom he found in a less good humour than usual.

"*Ah! vous voilà*, Monsieur Tournefort, here you are! Vat *bête* your master ees. I have not de patience vid dat man, he so fool."

"Heyday! what's the matter now, ma'mselle? Why, hang me, my pretty Justine, if you don't look as cross as two sticks, and as sour as vinegar."

"Vat you mean vid your two sticks, dat has not de sense common? You talk of two sticks, and feedlesticks—vat for you speak always of sticks? *Ma foi, vous méritez le bâton, bête que vous êtes.*"

"There, now, I'm sure you said something spiteful, ma'mselle, you looked so malicious, and spoke French. I always suspect you are saying no good when you speak your own language."

"*Quel imbécile! O, les Anglais! les Anglais!—qu'ils sont bêtes —mon Dieu, qu'ils sont bêtes!*"

"There, again, you are at it. But why can't you come to the point, and tell me what my master has done?"

"Done, done!—vy, he has let Madame Maclaurine see dat he not lofe her not at all; and she is vex, vex, and say she has good mind not to marry him not at all, and, *ma foi*, she have *raison*. Vat for, if he vant to marry her, he vex her, and let her see he not lofe her? Time enough for do dat ven he is her hoseband."

"You are right, my pretty Justine—quite right. It *was* very foolish of my lord, and I can't think why he did so. But you are so clever, and have such influence with your mistress, that I dare say you will soon set everything to rights."

"*Certainement, certainement;* but moche trouble I have, for, do madame is very fool in some tings, she not fool in all; and, ven she begins to see, it is not *facile* to make her shut her eyes after, and I vas oblige to svear dat I know, dat every body do know, dat milor lofe her to folly before she vould believe it. But if your master veel not play his own *rôle* in de *comédie*, it is no use for me to play mine, and so I veel tell him ven I see him. He most miud vat he is about, or he veel not have dis riche vife."

"By Jove! you alarm me, my pretty Justine. That *would* be a pretty job, indeed, and would be a sad disappointment for you and I, my sweet gal."

"For *me* not so moche, Monsieur Tournefort—for you, perhaps. *Qu'il est fat.*"

"Oh! for the matter of that, ma'mselle, if it would be no disappointment for *you*, I don't see why it should be to *me:* and, as for being fat, as you are pleased to say, though it isn't every one that's so mighty slim and genteel as *you* are, there's plenty of people who do not find fault with my fat, I can tell you; nor do I regret it, ma'mselle, for it proves I haven't lived upon frogs, all my life, whatever some folks may have done."

Durnford's face got so red, and his manner indicated so much anger, that Justine, who did not quite comprehend his meaning, looked at him with surprise, and then, bursting into a hearty laugh, she exclaimed,—

"*Ah, mon Dieu! quelle bonne farce.* He tink ven I say he is a *fat*, I talk of his person, ven I tink only of his mind."

"Then you mean to say I am fat-headed, or, in other words, that I am a fool," said Durnford. "I thank you for the compliment, ma'mselle; but I'd have you to know I'm no more a fool than my neighbours, whatever they may think to the contrary."

"You not onderstand vat I mean, Monsieur Tournefort. I not tink you fat in de person, nor fool, but I tink you have de vanity, yes, a great deal of de vanity, and dat is vat I said; but you not onderstand de French."

"Oh! that's quite another affair, ma'mselle," replied Durnford, brightening up. "As for vanity, I believe I have some reason for that, my pretty Justine. I am not ill-looking, am I?" and he drew himself up, and strutted about the room.

"No, Monsieur Tournefort, you are vere good-looking man, vat people call hansome; I not say de *contraire*."

"Yes, Justine, I flatter myself we shan't make a plain couple, no, nor an ill-dressed one neither; for you are the best dressed young lady I know in all Rome, and I think I may say there's not a noble man's valet here that makes so helegant an appearance as I do, is there?"

"But all ve talk dese matters is not no good, *mon ami*. You forget, in tinking only about yourself, dat dere is great danger dat your master may, after all, not marry madame, and therefore it ees of de *plus grande* importance—dat ees, of de vere great conse-

quence—dat milor pay moche attention, dat he make de *cour à* Madame Maclaurine, to make her believe vonce more dat he lofe her vid all hees heart, dat he not able to live vidout her; and, I believe," said Justine, smiling maliciously, "dat dis ees vere true, for I have hear dat *pauvre* milor has not no fortune."

"Why, he's not overburthened with cash, to say the truth, ma'mselle, but he comes of a great and noble family, and that's something, isn't it? And he can make your mistress a lady, and that's a precious sight more than nature has done or could do for her."

"Ah, Monsieur Tournefort, in *notre belle France*, madame could find moche grander titles dan milor. She could become a marquise, or even duchesse, for half de money. But she ees so ignorant, so stupide, she not like to marry a Frenchman."

"And she's right there, ma'mselle. Why should she let her money go out of her own country, I should like to know?"

"She find better husband in France—*plus poli*, *plus aimable*."

"I deny it. A fig for their polish. But I see, ma'mselle, you are always setting up your countrymen above mine, and I don't like it; and what's more, I won't stand it, that's what I won't." And Durnford seized his hat, and walked towards the door, but before he opened it, he turned to cast one more look at the coquettish Ma'mselle Justine, who, somewhat alarmed lest he should withdraw in anger, and so defeat any of her projects, suppressed every symptom of her displeasure, and forced a laugh.

"Vy, vat a fool man you are, Monsieur Tournefort! I only say all dat to make you jealous. Ha! ha! ha!" and again she laughed aloud.

"Ah, you little jade! I have a great mind to punish you for tormenting me so. How could you be so wicked?" and Mr. Durnford threw down his hat, and imprinted a kiss on the lips of Ma'mselle Justine.

"Have done, have done!" exclaimed she; "you *chiffonnez* my cap and my hair. *Regardez!*" and she ran to the mirror, and began arranging her curls and her cap. That operation performed, and it appeared a momentous one, the *femme de chambre* addressed her admirer as follows:—"Now, do not forget to tell your master dat madame has de suspicion vere moche, and dat he most be vere moche vid her, and make de court, and tell her she is *charmante*:

for, if he does not, she will break off de marriage, and dere will be an end of de business."

"I'll be sure to tell my lord," replied Durnford, fully determined not to say a word on the subject, well knowing that, though to a certain degree in the confidence of his master, there were some points, and this was one of them, on which he could not take the liberty of speaking; but, not wishing to let the Frenchwoman see that he was on a more reserved footing with his lord, than she was with her mistress.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Bright sparkling gems and silken sheen
Can ne'er disguise a vulgar mien;
These, spite of art, but more reveal
That which the wearer would conceal,
And those who view these gauds of pride
The weak vain owner will deride.

It was now the moment when the carnival was about to wind up the gaieties of Rome, and the eternal city, during a few days, presented scenes so grotesque, that one unaccustomed to such exhibitions might suppose that the saturnalia of the ancients was again being enacted. Masks of every description, and in the most fanciful costumes, thronged the streets, and the Corso, the focus of attraction on these occasions, was crowded. The balconies on each side of the street were filled with beautiful women, and their attendant *cavalieri*, while the centre was covered by carriages of every description, from the rich but cumbrous coaches and chariots of the Roman *noblesse*, and the neat and well appointed English equipages, down to the crazy and rattling vehicles on hire. The occupants of these carriages were as distinct and different as the conveyances themselves. In the heavy and gilded coaches and chariots of the Romans might be seen the high and finely chiselled brows, large lustrous eyes, and pale olive complexions that appertain to the noble dames of Italy, but peculiarly to those of Rome. The gravity of their aspects, too, accorded well with the stately though somewhat faded grandeur of their equipages, and reminded one of those fine cameos from which we form our first impressions of the character of beauty of the daughters of "the ancient mistress of the world."

Nor did the faces to be seen in the neat and well-appointed carriages of England belie the fame decreed to the loveliness of her female progeny. Foreheads fair as Parian marble, delicately pencilled brows, eyes blue as the skies above them, and cheeks that vied with the rose, proclaimed these fair and blooming flowers to have been nurtured in the garden of England. But what pen can describe the heterogeneous and incongruous groups that filled the hired vehicles? Sultanas elbowed peasants in their holiday attire; ladies, in the costumes of the Fourteenth Louis, reclined by the side of Negresses, in Barbaric, but somewhat tinselled finery; and nuns—oh, profanation!—figured with the Marions de l'Orme of their day, with their draperies "in most admired disorder." Hercules, like the wonderful bird described by the Irishman, seemed to possess the power of being at many places at once, for whichever way the eye glanced, it was sure to encounter a representative of this Pagan man of might, with the skin of the Nemean lion worn as a trophy over his shoulder, and his club in hand. To judge by the soiled appearance of the elastic web which figured for skin on the hero, one might conclude that he had but very lately completed the task of cleansing the Augean stables. Nothing could well be more ludicrous than these representatives of the son or Jupiter and Alcmena, being for the most part by no means remarkable for the height or muscular proportions of their stature, or for that courage attributed to their prototype, as was evinced by the dexterity with which they avoided danger, and their shrinking dismay when assailed by the showers of *bonbons*, which were thrown from the balconies and windows on either side of the Corso. Nor was the God of War without his copyists, and most grotesque ones they were. Vulcans, too, limped after Venuses, who, alas! bore no symptoms of having lately come in contact with any purer waves than those of the turbid Tiber; and Junoes, forgetful of the dignity of the wife of the Immortal Thunderer, elbowed their way along, with a vigour that would not have shamed one of the athletæ of old. The very coachmen who drove the hired vehicles personated characters—some figured as old women, in the most absurd costumes, while others were attired as Bacchantes, crowned with grapes, which shook as they were jolted by the movement of the carriages.

The ambassadors, in their state equipages, had just driven through the Corso, when all eyes were attracted by a very gaudy chariot, with a coachman and three footmen wearing the most

showy liveries, and the horses nearly covered with ribands. In the carriage were seated two ladies, one of whom was in the costume of a sultana, wearing a profusion of costly jewels. The *outré* appearance of this lady, who was also very plain, joined to the bad taste and gaudiness of her equipage, produced considerable merriment among the crowd, while showers of *bonbons* saluted the sultana from every side, much to her annoyance, as was testified by angry looks and violent gestures. The carriage of this lady stopped at the next door to the house in the balcony of which Lady Wellerby, her daughters, Mrs. and Miss Sydney, Strathern, and Mr. Rhymer had taken their places, and soon after the sultana and her companion took their seats on an adjoining balcony, to which all eyes were directed.

"The widow of the stockbroker, by all that is good!" exclaimed Mr. Rhymer to Mrs. Sydney. "Is she not charming? What a sultana! I must get as near her as I can, for her remarks must be as amusing as her appearance."

"Don't tell me that it's the custom to throw things in this way," said Mrs. Maclaurin—for it was no other than that lady—to her alarmed companion, Mrs. Bernard. "Look at me; see how I am scratched and bruised. I dare say I shall be black and blue all over, to-morrow. A pack of brutes to pelt a lady in this manner. And they call this pleasure, do they? Who ever saw such a thing happen in England!"

"You should have held the tin shield before your face, madam, and that would have saved you."

"But if I had, what would have been the good of wearing my diamonds?—nobody would have seen them."

To this remark Mrs. Bernard made no reply, but, scarcely had it been uttered, when a shower of *bonbons*, thrown with unerring aim, alighted on the face and person of Mrs. Maclaurin, who, irritated by the bruises they inflicted, and the chalky stains left on her dress, neck, and arms, angrily seized a quantity of the same missiles from a dépôt of them provided by her courier, and launched them with all her might at the crowd. The violence of her gestures, and the redness of her face and neck, occasioned by her wrathful emotions, as well as by the movement of her arms, rendered her a most ludicrous as well as a most conspicuous object, and, as the passing crowd looked up at her, peals of laughter might be heard, which greatly increased her anger.

"Look at her," said Mr. Rhymer; "she resembles nothing

human at this moment, with that dark, red face, around which so many brilliants are sparkling. She reminds me of the pieces of raw meat said to be thrown into the Valley of Diamonds, and to which so many of those precious gems adhere. I only wish that some vast bird of prey would descend and bear her off in his talons, as these said pieces of raw flesh are served for sake of preserving the diamonds. But this wish cannot fail to be accomplished. Some bird of prey, in the shape of a ruined spendthrift, for love of filthy lucre, will bear away this creature one of these days, notwithstanding her ugliness and vulgarity."

"Let me implore you, madam, to desist," said Mrs. Bernard, in the most humble accents, her own person covered with white marks from the showers of *bonbons* that had hit her.

"But, I tell you, I *won't* desist. Haven't I as good a right to throw at them as they have to throw at me?" and, suiting the action to the words, she filled both her large hands with the sweetmeats, and discharged them at the passers-by, who, in turn, sent up such a volley at her that she found herself almost blinded, and screamed with pain and passion. Nevertheless, again and again she threw down handfuls of *bonbons* with a violence of action and vigour that denoted the rage she was in, and convinced her antagonists, and their name was legion, that the sultana must be a man in disguise. This belief induced a continuation of hostilities on their part much stronger than ought or than probably would have been directed towards a woman, until the police thought it necessary to interfere; but even then the spirited sultana, determined to remain victor of the field, continued to pelt her late assailants with such pertinacity and force that two of the police deemed it expedient to enter the house from the balcony of which she was so actively hurling defiance at her foes, and soon stood beside her, to the terror of Mrs. Bernard, who, with dishevelled locks and disordered garments, stood entrenched behind Mrs. Maclaurin, who was loudly and angrily reproaching her for her pusillanimity in not appearing in the brunt of the action, and for not lending her assistance to discomfit her foes.

"Oh! for Heaven's sake, madam, stop!" cried the timid *dame de compagnie:* "here are the police, and you will be arrested."

"What do I care for them?" replied the lady. "Was it I that began the affray? and haven't I a right to defend myself? A pack of cowardly ragamuffins, to attack one of the fair sex!"

The appearance of the speaker was so wholly at variance with

all idea of the sex to whose privilege and claim to protection she referred, that none of the persons on the adjoining balcony who heard her—and she spoke so loudly that nearly all did—could resist laughing.

"Pretty usage for the fair sex, indeed!" observed Mr. Rhymer, with a comical mixture of gravity and mischief in his pale countenance.

All the individuals on the balcony of Mrs. Sydney and her party now lent attentive ears to hear what was passing between Mrs. Maclaurin and the police. These last, with considerable sternness, commanded the excited combatant to desist, but she, wholly ignorant of their language, glanced defiance at them. Mrs. Bernard then explained to her the purport of their visit, and the prudence of not resisting their advice.

"Hold your tongue, you stupid fool!" replied Mrs. Maclaurin, her face flushing anew with anger. "I don't know their lingo, and I don't want to understand what they say; then why should you, like a busybody thankless, try to explain it to me? Hold your tongue, I say, and leave me to talk to them. What do you mean by coming up to my balcony to insult me, I should like to know?" said the dauntless amazon, confronting the police, and placing her arms in the posture in which Holbein painted the bluff Harry the Eighth. "I'd have you to know that I'm an English woman, ay, and a rich one too, able to buy half your dirty old city, with its shabby ruins, and your old Pope into the bargain."

The men stared at her with astonishment, but, evidently angered by her contemptuous looks at them, and her violent gestures, they were preparing to lay hands on her in order to remove her from the balcony, when Strathern advanced, and, addressing them in Italian, explained that the lady did not understand their language, and was ignorant that she committed any impropriety in throwing *bonbons* at those who had so roughly pelted them at her. He requested that they would no further molest his countrywoman, and, to enforce his arguments in her favour, slipped a golden coin into the hand of the superior of the police, which seemed so satisfactory a plea to him, that, having stipulated for the lady's observing a less belligerent line of conduct and demeanour for the rest of the day, he and his companion withdrew, and left Mrs. Maclaurin and her *dame de compagnie* in peaceful possession of her balcony.

"I'm sure I'm very much obleeged to you," said that lady,

"You have behaved very much like a gentleman to me, that's what you have, which is more than some people have;" and she cast an angry glance at Mr. Rhymer, whose sneers and sepulchral smile she had detected. "I have no notion of submitting to ill-treatment, and though I am but a woman, I will always stand up for the honour of Old England against a pack of foreign, half-starved, beggarly foreigners. Why, I could buy the whole of them, and not be much the poorer for it, for, God be thanked, I can count hundreds, ay, and thousands, too, with most people; and there's a lord in Rome at present who, if he knew how I have been insulted by them ragamuffins, would soon settle 'em, and maybe I'll soon be a lady of title myself, and then some people," and she again looked angrily at Mr. Rhymer, "will not be so ready with their sneers and smiles."

Strathern, having bowed, was about to turn away from the spot, when Mrs. Maclaurin again addressed him :—

"Will you tell me your name, sir, that I may know to whom I am so much obleeged?"

"Strathern, madam; but I assure you, you owe me no obligation whatever; I only did for you what I should have done for any lady under similar circumstances."

"It's very genteel of you, sir, to make light of your kindness; but only think, if I was taken off, God only knows where, by them horrible police, with all my jewels," and she glanced complacently at the rich ornaments on her person, "what a terrible thing it would be! You must really come and dine with me at the Hotel Bretagne. You'll not find a better dinner in all Rome, I can tell you, for I spare no expense—why should I? And you'll meet a nobleman of great fashion, who takes potluck with me most days."

"I am sorry, madam, that I cannot have the honour of waiting on you."

"Well, sure another day will do as well, and you can't be engaged for every day."

"I regret that it is quite out of my power to avail myself of your kindness." And, making a low bow, Strathern turned from the end of the balcony adjoining Mrs. Maclaurin, and took his place by Louisa Sydney.

"What a strange man, and yet he is very genteel, too!" said Mrs. Maclaurin to her *dame de compagnie*. "Indeed, I may say he is one of the most elegant men I ever saw, though there is some-

thing proud and distant-like in his behaviour. It was for all the world as if he didn't wish to come and dine with me. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, madam, he appeared unwilling to cultivate your acquaintance," replied the meek Mrs. Bernard, almost afraid to admit this humiliating fact to the lady who elicited the acknowledgment.

"What can be the reason?" resumed Mrs. Maclaurin. "He must have seen by my jewels that none but a lady of great fortune could afford to wear 'em, so it's strange he wasn't ready to jump at my invitation. But there's something very odd in all these *grandees*. One never knows how to take them, for they are as full of fancies as a dancing bear. Even my lord himself isn't free from 'em. Ah! a thought strikes me, and I'll engage I'm right. He was afraid to come for fear of making my lord jealous, for I mentioned that maybe I'd soon be a titled lady myself, and afterwards I said there was a lord who dined with me most days. I did it just to show him I wasn't a nobody, and you may depend it frightened him from coming. Well, perhaps 'twas all for the better, for my lord is always very crusty about my having young men about me, and has refused to introduce any But I 'm determined on one thing, which is, that I must not lay under an obligation to this gentleman, for I'll send him a present of a diamond ring, with a motto engraved on it, and I'll make the motto myself. I make verses very often when I have nothing else to think of, but I soon forget 'em, so now take your tablets out of your pocket, and write down what I tell you."

Mrs. Bernard did as she was told, and Mrs. Maclaurin, after a few minutes' reflection, dictated to her the following lines :—

> Because from the police you did me save,
> I send this ring in honour of the brave.

"What do you think of that?" demanded she with an air of triumph. "Now, I'd bet a guinea, if I asked you to compose a motto, you'd have spent an hour about it, and not have done it half so well. I'm the one for knocking off a verse at a minute's notice."

Mr. Rhymer, who had overheard all that was passing between Mrs. Maclaurin and her *dame de compagnie*, and who was infinitely amused at it, observed to Lady Wellerby that it was a pity that the lady in the next balcony did not publish her poetry.

This remark caught the ear of Mrs. Maclaurin, who instantly

turned and said, "Why should I publish my poetry, I should like to know? Who does that, except poor shabby people, who want money? I make verses to please myself, and *am* rich enough to buy all the poetry ever made in England, I can tell you."

"No one doubts your wealth, madam, in any way. Of your intellectual riches you have just given an indubitable proof."

"Yes, I have plenty of proofs about me," and she glanced at her ornaments. "Who but a lady of great fortune could afford to wear such jewels as these?"

"Far be it from me, madam, to doubt your wealth, talents, or good taste," observed Mr. Rhymer. "None who have the happiness of seeing you could call them in question."

"You speak civilly enough now, but let me tell you that I saw you sneering and smiling, for all the world like one of those frightful faces I have seen when I have had the nightmare, after eating too hearty a supper."

This coarse comparison produced a laugh from all present, which, though they endeavoured to suppress it, was nevertheless visible to Mr. Rhymer, who, casting on his *soi-disant* friends a glance in which anger and scorn were mingled, turned away, and left the balcony.

"Did you ever see a look like that?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin of Lady Wellerby, who happened to be placed at the end of the balcony next her; but that lady, unwilling to encourage any approach to conversation with the *parvenue*, affected not to hear her remark.

"Are you deaf, ma'am?" resumed the widow. "I spoke to you just now, and you might have the common civility of giving an answer."

"I make it a point, madam, of never conversing with persons I don't know," replied Lady Wellerby, assuming an air of *hauteur*.

"Then why did you spake to me at the ball cost-chew me, I'd like to know? for I recollect your voice, though I didn't remember your face, it looks so much worse by daylight than when it was painted up to make you appear like a queen."

"Pray, mamma, don't answer her," said Lady Sophia.

"And why not, miss? If that's the politeness your mother has taught you, you haven't much to thank her for, but she has been as kind to you as Nature has, for I declare I never in all my born days saw a plainer woman."

"I wish my carriage was come," said Lady Wellerby; "I really don't like being exposed to that person's rudeness."

"You don't, don't you? I should like to know who began it? If you had answered me civilly when I spoke to you, I'd have been as polite as any lady in Rome: but as you choosed to show your airs, I've just given you a bit of my mind. I suppose that horrid-looking little old man that I sent away, by making you all laugh at him, is your husband, for I see a great family likeness between him and your daughter. What a pity you hadn't twins of her!"

"For Heaven's sake, madam, say no more!" interposed Mrs. Bernard casting an appealing glance at Mrs. Maclaurin.

"And why not, pray? Am I to hold my tongue and look like a fool, because I meet an ugly, rude old woman, and her ugly, rude daughter? I didn't hire you to teach me manners, but to do as you are told, so mind your own business, and don't interfere with me."

"Mr. Strathern, will you ask one of the servants to inquire for my carriage. I really must leave this," said Lady Wellerby.

"Maybe, you'd leave us a lock of your hair—no, a lock of your wig," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, bursting into a coarse laugh.

"Pray change places with me, Olivia. I cannot stay near that person."

Lady Olivia did as she was requested, but foolishly bestowed a contemptuous glance at her mother's tormentor.

"You need not look so disdainful, miss, for you are ugly enough in all conscience, without making grimaces," observed Mrs. Maclaurin. "You also have the family likeness to your wizen-face father, with something of your plain mother joined to it. You are, indeed, as ugly a family as ever I'd wish to look at."

Strathern now re-entered the balcony, and acquainted Lady Wellerby that no carriage would be permitted to approach the door until after the promenade in the Corso was over, which would not be before the expiration of two hours. "If, however," continued Strathern, in French, and in a low tone of voice, "you will not take notice of the lady in the next balcony, and prevent the ladies Sophia and Olivia from looking at or replying to her, she will, I dare say, leave off addressing you."

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Sydney," exclaimed Lady Wellerby, "what a dreadful person! She has positively quite fluttered me. How fortunate it is that Lord Wellerby or Lord Fitzwarren was not here. There is no knowing to what extremities they might not have pro-

ceeded, for both are impetuous, particularly in all that regards the feelings of those dear to them. I am so accustomed to the protection of my lord, that the least thing in his absence alarms me. You, who have been for twenty-four years deprived of similar protection, and who have of course got accustomed to act for yourself and bustle through life, can form no idea of my timidity and nervousness."

There was a double purpose in this speech, of which Mrs. Sydney was well aware. The first was, to take for granted that Louisa Sydney was five or six years older than she really was, for the sake of passing off her own daughters as being the same age; and the second was, to remind Mrs. Sydney of the loss of her husband, in doing which Lady Wellerby had a spiteful pleasure, in revenge for the envy Mrs. Sydney's wealth and independence excited in her breast. Often had Lady Wellerby confessed to herself that she would gladly have changed positions with her whose unprotected state she affected to pity, and the beauty and fortune of whose daughter created such a jealousy in her and hers. But these *coups de patte* produced no other effect on Mrs. Sydney's mind than a sentiment of pity for the weakness and littleness of the understanding that could find pleasure in inflicting them, and she never condescended to notice or refute them.

"We receive such delightful letters from Lord Fitzwarren," said Lady Wellerby, "that I am glad I carried my point of making him fill up the time that must elapse before the marriage settlements can come from England, by making an excursion into those parts of Italy which he had not previously seen. I had, as you may suppose, the utmost difficulty to persuade him to go, for he could not, poor fellow, bear the notion of being separated from Olivia for a few weeks; but I was firm, and insisted on the measure, for nothing seems so tiresome to me as the courting days that occur between the acceptance of a lover and the nuptials."

Lady Wellerby looked at Louisa Sydney and Strathern, as if to apply her opinion to their peculiar case.

"I should have thought," replied Mrs. Sydney, calmly, "that you would have been pleased at an opportunity of getting better acquainted with the disposition and habits of your future son-in-law."

"Oh, dear! I have nothing to learn in this respect. I am very quick in discovering the character and disposition of those with whom I associate; and Lord Fitzwarren's heart is so guileless, and

his mind so transparent, that it requires but a short time, indeed, to become perfectly well acquainted with him. Then, poor dear fellow, he is so desperately in love that he cannot conceal any of his peculiarities. I never, since the time that Lord Wellerby became enamoured with me, beheld any man so much in love as Lord Fitzwarren. He was quite desperate, I assure you, and made such a scene at parting from Olivia that I quite pitied him, and was almost tempted to recall my sentence of temporary banishment."

Lady Sophia, who overheard her mother's monologue, turned up her eyes to the clouds, as if to appeal to the Gods to bear witness to the outrage on veracity which that good lady was perpetrating, and Lady Olivia looked embarrassed.

"When a man is in love for the first time," resumed Lady Wellerby, "and this, I presume, you are aware, was the case with Lord Fitzwarren, it is but natural that he should be a little disposed to make a fool of himself, and spoil, or at least endeavour to spoil, the object of his affection. I was afraid of this, so sent him away, and I should advise all mothers under similar circumstances to follow my example, for it is tiresome, if not injurious, to see a man for months tied to a young lady's apron-string, and following her about like a tame lapdog;" and again the speaker fixed her gaze on Louisa Sydney and Strathern, who were conversing together, unmindful of the envious glances of the Ladies Sophia and Olivia Wellerby, and their mother.

While the conversation we have noted was occurring in Mrs. Sydney's balcony, Mrs. Maclaurin, heartily tired of enacting the *rôle* of sultana, kept continually looking at her diamond-set watch in anxiety for the arrival of her carriage to remove her from the place, of which she had got perfectly fatigued.

"And they call this pleasure, do they?" said she to her wearied and forlorn-looking companion. "Was there ever such an imposition on the public? And to think that I have paid ten louis a day for the hire of this balcony, to have my face, neck, and arms battered and bruised by the pelting I have got; my arms, too, are so tired from throwing, that I can hardly move them. How mad my lord will be when he hears how I have been treated! He'll never believe that the police would have the impudence to dare lay hands on a lady of my fortin. I dare say, if the truth were known, that they were brigands in disguise, who, seeing my fine jewels, laid a plot to carry me off, and keep me until I paid them a large ransom,

just as somebody read to me in England happened to a rich lady. Yes, I'm quite sure they were brigands."

The carriages were now permitted to drive to the door; and Mrs. Maclaurin, casting a glance of the utmost disdain at Lady Wellerby, and kissing her hand to Strathern, entered hers, and drove off.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Oh! never smooth did run the course of love:
So wrote a bard all other bards above,
For e'en where fortune wears its brightest smile,
And hope's resolved to certainty, the while
That nought opposes happiness, some care,
Before unthought of, finds an entrance there
Where only peace and confidence did reign,
And every fond illusion turns to pain.
Ah, me! that hearts the fondest should receive
Suspicion, guest that comes but to deceive,
And banish faith, the shield that love should guard,
Which brings its own exceeding great reward.

"I must absent myself from you this evening, dearest Louisa," said Strathern to his betrothed; when, having, for the first time since his engagement to her daughter, declined an invitation to dinner from Mrs. Sydney, he was on the point of leaving them.

"*Not* dine here, and *not* come in the evening!" repeated Louisa, with an air in which disappointment, if not displeasure, was mingled with surprise.

"So it must be, I regret to say, for I have promised to spend this evening with an old and much valued friend, in very delicate health, who arrived last night, *en route* for Naples."

"And who is your friend?" asked Miss Sydney.

"Lord Delmington."

"The son of the Marquis of Roehampton, I presume" observed Mrs. Sydney. "I knew his father and mother well, many years ago, and Lady Roehampton was a most amiable and excellent person."

"Her son inherits all her amiability, with her delicate constitution also, and is, I fear, in a hopeless state of health."

"The marchioness, I believe, has been dead some years, which must have greatly affected the happiness of her son, for the Marquis

of Roehampton was a stern and cold man, the only tenderness of whose nature was evinced by a strong attachment to his amiable and excellent wife."

"Yes," replied Strathern, "my poor friend sustained a heavy loss in the death of his mother, who exercised a most humanizing influence over her proud and austere husband, who, ever since she was snatched from him, has relapsed into an unbending sternness and gloom, that has rendered the paternal mansion far from an agreeable home to his only son."

"I should like to see Lord Delmington," said Mrs. Sydney, "and show him any attention or kindness in my power, not only on account of my former friendship for his mother, but of yours with him."

"Unfortunately he is not at present able to avail himself of your good-natured intentions in his favour, as he is such an invalid as to be unable to walk without assistance."

"But you need not, surely, remain with your friend the *whole* evening," said Louisa Sydney. "An invalid would probably wish to retire to his bed at an early hour, and then you could come to us."

"I must be guided by my poor friend's wishes, dear Louisa, on this occasion, for he would take it ill were I, after so long a separation, to hurry away from him."

Miss Sydney looked and felt displeased, and Strathern marked with dissatisfaction that she was so. Far from feeling gratified by what a few weeks previously he would have considered as an unequivocal proof of the affection of his affianced wife, he looked on her unwillingness to his absenting himself for the evening as a mark of the self-will which, on a former occasion, he had detected in her disposition. Perhaps his countenance betrayed what was passing in his mind, or that, unconsciously, his manner revealed it to the quick-sighted Louisa, for immediately hers became changed, and, assuming an air of indifference she was far from feeling, she saw him take his hat to depart, scarcely vouchsafing him her hand; and ere he had time to descend the stairs, he heard her playing a lively air on her pianoforte. Her music, for the first time, jarred on his ear. Was she enacting a part in thus appearing so indifferent, when only a few minutes previously she had exhibited such a desire for his returning to see her in the evening? On descending into the Piazza d'Espagna, he crossed, as he was wont, to the opposite side, and turned his eyes to see if Louisa was at the window.

to kiss her hand to him, a little ceremony of love she was accustomed to perform every day when he left her, even though he only went away to dress for dinner, and was to return in an hour or two. So used had he been to see her at that window, gazing after him until his form receded from her view, that again and again he paused to look back, in the hope that she would appear; but no fair form met his anxious gaze, no delicate hand waved him an adieu, and, hurt and mortified, he recalled with bitterness all that had formerly displeased him in the unaccountable coldness and change of manner in his betrothed wife, after the *bal costumé*.

"She loves me not," thought Strathern, "or, if she does, her self-will is stronger than her affection. If she were pained at my leaving her for a whole evening, could she have seen me depart without one kind word or glance, or could she have sat down to the piano to play that brisk noisy air—I shall always hate it—which sounded so disagreeably in my ears while I descended the stairs? Ah! why is not she as faultless in mind as she is in face and in person?"

Mrs. Sydney observed that her daughter was displeased; for as soon as Strathern had time to leave the house, Louisa ceased playing, and abruptly closed her pianoforte. She then took up her pencil and began sketching, but that occupation was also as quickly abandoned to give place to a book, the leaves of which she listlessly turned over, with an air of abstraction that denoted how little she was interested in their contents. The book, too, was soon thrown aside, and Louisa, with a clouded brow, arose and left the *salon*. Mrs. Sydney was more than half disposed to detain her daughter, and draw her into a conversation in which she might introduce the advice she so anxiously longed to give Louisa, and of which she evidently stood so much in need, for the fond mother beheld with regret that her daughter's *exigence* and waywardness, whatever might be the cause, might have a serious influence on the happiness of her affianced husband, if not on her own. But, on reflection, she feared to touch on the subject she so much wished to counsel Louisa on, while the mind of the latter was still irritated, and postponed giving her advice until her daughter was in a more propitious mood to receive it.

"My poor Louisa," thought Mrs. Sydney, "how much has she to learn ere she can bestow or receive the happiness I desire her to enjoy! She expects an obedience to her will, and an attention to her wishes, that few, if any, men, however in love, are disposed to

yield, and bitter will be her disappointment when she discovers this fact. O! may it not destroy her chance of conjugal felicity! I fear I have been much to blame for my unwise and weak indulgence to her. Too late do I perceive my error, and gladly, ho! how gladly, would I atone for it! I saw that Mr. Strathern was hurt and annoyed by her manner, when he explained why he could not return here this evening. He left her in displeasure, and may, at this moment, be reflecting with chagrin on her affected indifference when he took leave of her.

"My poor dear Louisa, mine is the fault. Yours was a temper and disposition that in wiser, firmer hands might—nay, must have rendered you happy yourself, and a source of happiness to others. Why, oh! why have I, by my weak, my doting fondness, allowed tares to spring up where only flowers were meant to bloom? Even now, though conscious of my great error, I have not the courage or the power to cope with its baleful effects. I shrink with pusillanimity from the task of revealing to her the risk she incurs in injuring, if not of destroying, her repose by expecting and exacting a devotion beyond that which lordly man is disposed to accord, even to her he best loves. I have forfeited her filial respect to my counsel by the weakness with which from her childhood I have yielded assent to her wishes, and now count only on the tie I hold on her affection."

Such were the grave and painful reflections that passed through the mind of Mrs. Sydney in the solitude in which her daughter left her for two hours. They met not again until dinner, when the anxious mother discovered traces of tears in the eyes of her child, and noticed that her cheek was pale from emotion. The repast was nearly a silent one. Neither mother nor daughter had any appetite to partake of the viands placed before them, and although each attempted to impose on the other by affecting to eat, neither was deceived, and both were conscious of a painful state of constraint.

There are few situations more irksome than that in which two persons fondly attached find themselves when the thoughts of both are occupied by one subject, which, for some cause or other, neither likes to touch upon. Both mother and daughter felt this, and each experienced a self-reproach—the parent, because by her false indulgence she had lost the influence she ought to have possessed over her daughter; and the daughter, because she admitted to herself that a false pride precluded her from seeking sympathy and

consolation from her mother. Anxious to escape from a *tête-à-tête* which, under existing circumstances, promised to be so cheerless, Louisa Sydney proposed that, as the night was peculiarly fine, they should drive to the Coliseum.

"As we are so soon to leave Rome, perhaps it will be the last evening, dear mother, that we can visit this spot, which I confess has, when lit by the moonbeams, a peculiar attraction for me," said the lovely girl; and Mrs. Sydney immediately assented, making it a condition to her compliance that her daughter should put on a warm pelisse and shawl. Arrived at the Coliseum, Louisa, proposed that they should leave the carriage, and, attended by their servant, once more walk through the vast arena; and, although Mrs. Sydney made some objections, they were soon overruled by her daughter, and arm in arm they entered this noble vestige of Roman grandeur.

"Let us retire behind yonder abutment." said Louisa, "and thence in its deep shade observe the glorious effect of the moonbeams as they enter through the arches on the opposite side."

"We shall be chilled, dearest," replied Mrs. Sydney, "and, to own the truth, I am somewhat timid in so lonely a place and with only one attendant."

"Indulge me this once, dear mother. Indeed, there is nothing to dread. Yonder priest is within hearing, and no brigands have frequented this spot since it has been consecrated to religious uses."

While thus conversing, Louisa led her mother into the dark portion of the building, whence, as she had anticipated, a fine view of the building illumined by the moonbeams met their gaze, and they were contemplating it in silent and rapt admiration when the sound of approaching footsteps announced the immediate vicinity of other visiters to the spot. A male figure, with a lady leaning on his arm, walked slowly in front of the recess where Mrs. Sydney and Louisa stood, concealed by the deep shadow that surrounded them. The light fell on the countenance of the woman, which was upturned to that of her companion, who bent down with an air of deep attention to listen to her conversation. So exquisite was the beauty of the lady's face, illumined by the silver light, which invested it with something of a heavenly radiance, that both mother and daughter's gaze became fixed on it, and neither looked at the gentleman who accompanied the object of their admiration. The person who riveted their attention now passed so near them, that the sound of

her voice could be heard as in accents low, clear, and musical, she said, "May I indeed depend on you?"

"Doubt me not. Have I not pledged my solemn promise?" replied the man, in well-known accents, which made both Mrs. Sydney and Louisa start, while the speaker, raising his head, as if appealing to the bright luminary then slowly sailing through the dark azure vault of heaven, revealed the face of Strathern.

Louisa felt as if an arrow had been shot through her heart, and trembled so violently, that her mother threw both her arms around her slender waist, lest she should fall to the ground; yet she uttered no cry, although one of deep agony arose from her tortured breast to her lips: but, even in that moment of terrible trial, pride, indomitable pride, sealed those trembling lips, and sent back to her breast the cry that would have revealed her agony. Strathern and the lady walked slowly away, and Mrs. Sydney, herself nearly overpowered by emotion, bore her daughter to a stone bench that was near at hand. Louisa placed both her hands on her heart, as if to still its throbbings, which were so violent as to preclude the power of utterance, and to alarm her fond mother beyond measure.

"Let us go home, my child," said Mrs. Sydney. And there was such a depth of tenderness and pity in the tone in which these few simple words were uttered, that it found its way to her daughter's breast, and brought relief to her overcharged feelings by a flood of tears, with which those of the mother mingled.

"Let us go hence, my own Louisa," repeated Mrs. Sydney; and her daughter, slowly rising, and leaning on her arm, with trembling steps moved to the carriage.

"You saw him, mother, did you not?" demanded Louisa, in a low and tremulous voice, as if she wished her parent to throw a doubt on the evidence presented to her own eyes.

"Yes, dearest, I did see him; but we must not judge too hastily, nor by appearances—we must not condemn him unheard. He may be able to explain what now appears so mysterious, and I almost regret that I did not let him know our near vicinity to him."

"Ah! you say this, dear mother, to comfort me; but it is useless—it is vain. I have only myself to blame; for, had I confessed to you all that has passed in my breast since the night of the *bal costumé*, you would have counselled and supported me, and I had been spared the shock that has just now lacerated my heart, and shattered my nerves."

"My own Louisa—my precious child," murmured Mrs. Sydney, as she pressed her daughter fondly to her side.

"Yes, your own, *all* your own now!" whispered Louisa; "for henceforth, mother, to you, and you only, will your child look for happi—" but a burst of passionate tears broke the sentence.

"Do not, my Louisa, condemn him unheard; it is all I ask."

"Alas! mother, I no longer doubt. What I have beheld is but a confirmation of reports, to which I—fond and weak dupe!—refused credence; but now all is revealed."

How strange and wayward is the human heart! Louisa Sydney expected that her mother would make a more vigorous defence for Strathern, and urge all the possible excuses for the romantic *tête-à-tête* they had both just witnessed, which were pleading in her own fond heart. Nay, more, she expected, and perhaps hoped, that Mrs. Sydney would assert, and persist in believing, that the lady they saw with Strathern must be some near relative, or the wife of some most intimate friend; and she, who would have given millions, had she possessed them, to be convinced of this, prepared herself to combat the reasoning of her parent. But when no such attempt to explain away the *tête à tête* walk they had unpremeditatedly witnessed was made, and that Mrs. Sydney confined herself to requesting that he might not be condemned unheard, Louisa's own heart pleaded more eloquently for her lover than all the reasoning of her mother could have done had she been disposed to employ it. A person, the most experienced in reading the human heart, and in judging its manifold mysteries and weaknesses, could not have adopted a more judicious course towards her daughter on the present trying occasion than that unconsciously pursued by Mrs. Sydney, who, thinking that Strathern's conduct was, to say the least of it, inexplicable, forbore to defend it until he should furnish her with the means. Gladly would she have urged some extenuation, if any offered itself, to her transparent and honourable mind; but, as she reflected on the pertinacity with which Strathern resisted the request of Louisa to return from his friend and spend the latter part of the evening with them, she was compelled, however well disposed to think favourably of him, to admit that his presence at the Coliseum, *tête à tête* with the beautiful unknown, joined to the evidence of the few words they had heard him utter, afforded ground for suspicion even to the coolest and most disinterested observer.

When they reached home, and that the light in the drawing-room revealed to the anxious mother the change effected in her daughter's aspect since, a short time before, when they quitted that chamber with the roses of health blooming on her beautiful cheeks, how was Mrs. Sydney's heart touched and her maternal solicitude alarmed for her beloved child! Her anxiety, her tenderness, and, above all, the sympathy she evinced with Louisa's feelings, deeply touched that young lady, and so operated on her, that when placed on the sofa, with her hand fondly clasped in that of her mother, she revealed to her the mysterious whispers of the conjurer at the *bal costumé*, with the doubts and fears they awakened in her breast, and left nothing concealed except the vague communications of Nurse Murray, which a sense of shame at her own weakness in confiding to her that which she had not told to her mother, prevented her from uttering. No false pride now withheld Louisa from betraying the deep sorrow which the detection of her lover's infidelity had that night inflicted on her heart. She wept on her fond mother's bosom those bitter tears that the discovery of unworthiness in those in whom we had garnered up the affection that was to brighten and cheer us through life never fail to make flow; and the weight of sorrow and disappointment oppressing her tortured breast was lightened by the blessed balm of sympathy by which her sufferings were shared by her doting parent.

"Who, dearest mother, could have believed him capable of such duplicity, such heartless conduct? Who, after witnessing it, could ever again put faith in man? Even after the warning at the *bal costumé* I could not bring myself to credit the charges urged against him, and blamed myself for having allowed them to make the slightest impression on me. Who would not have been deceived, as I was, by this specious dissembler, who seemed to possess every good and noble quality that could win and justify affection?"

"I would not, my precious child, irritate your feelings by attempting a defence, where I have no proof to produce against the evidence of our eyes. All I would urge is, that you will not refuse to hear what explanation he can offer for the scene of this evening."

"But think, mother, of the shame, the degradation of entering on such a subject—of betraying, as I inevitably should do, even a portion of what I feel! Oh, no! let me see him, hear him no more, and so avoid the bitter pangs and deep humiliation which

an interview, under existing circumstances, could not fail to excite."

"Consider, my own Louisa, that some explanation for so abruptly breaking off all intercourse with him will be required. It is due to him—to ourselves."

"Do not require me to see him again, mother; indeed I am not equal to it," and a passionate burst of tears attested how much even the thought of seeing her lover affected the poor girl.

"We will speak of this no more to-night, my blessed child. You have need of quiet and repose."

The pale face and melancholy shake of the head, which marked Louisa Sydney's hopelessness of finding the quiet and repose recommended by her mother, inflicted a fresh pang on the heart of the latter, who, inured to sorrow, had learned in the school of affliction how heavily the first crushing blow falls on the young. Subdued by the painful emotions of the last few hours, Louisa Sydney submitted to the will of her mother as meekly as a poor child, exhausted by bodily suffering accepts, owing to not having sufficient physical force to reject them, the remedies offered. A cup of *tilleul*, with some orange-flower water, prepared by Mrs. Sydney herself, was swallowed, and, having undressed her daughter, the tender mother did not leave her station by her pillow until the beams of the morning penetrated the chamber, and that the breathing of her daughter assured her she was sleeping.

"And you too, my darling," thought Mrs. Sydney, as she bent over her sleeping daughter ere she quitted the room, "all my care, all my love, cannot preserve from pain and sorrow. So gifted by nature and fortune, you are not exempted from eating cares. Ah! would that I could bear the burthen that falls so heavily on your youthful heart!—I, who have drank of the cup of sorrow even unto the dregs, and whose sole chance of happiness depends on witnessing yours! How curved is that fair and open brow, on which peace so lately rested! How pale the cheek, and what an expression of grief rests on those lips that a few hours ago were smiling! Hark! they move—she speaks!"

"Henry, dear Henry," murmured Louisa, "'twas all a dream, a frightful dream; but it made me *so wretched!*" and the slumberer sighed deeply, and ceased to speak.

"My child, my poor child, may Heaven bless and preserve you!" whispered Mrs. Sydney, as she stole on tiptoe from the chamber.

and sent Murray to take her place for a short time by the couch of her daughter.

The sighs—and they were deep and frequent—which stole from the agitated heart of the fevered slumberer inflicted real uneasiness on the faithful nurse. "Ah, well-a-day!" mused she, "something very terrible has happened, I am sure, or my sweet young lady would not have come home in such a taking. What can it have been? She must have heard or seen something very shocking, I'm sure, and Mr. Strathern must be at the bottom of it all. I wish, for my part, that she had never set eyes on him, for of late she has never been the same person, and, before she knew him, she was as blithe as a lark, and I never saw a frown on her brow. Yes, Mrs. Bloxham must be right; there *is* some mystery or other about this gentleman. Why, if there was not, should she shake her head in that remarkable manner? I never can get that shake out of my mind. It said more terrible things than if she spoke for an hour."

"Henry, don't look so alarmed. I am better now, indeed I am," murmured the sleeper, and there was so much love and gentleness in the tone of her voice that Nurse Murray's eyes filled with tears.

"Ah, dear heart, there it is! Asleep or awake, thinking of him, I warrant me. Poor, sweet young lady! there she lies in all her beauty, only wanting wings to be a ready-made angel to fly to heaven. Sure, it's enough to melt a heart of stone to look on her. O! those men, those men! what can they be made of to be always giving sorrow and trouble to those that love 'em? One might think they were not born of women, nor nursed by 'em, they show so little feeling for the fair sect. Ah! if I stood in my young mistress's place, wouldn't I punish Mr. Strathern? I'd just pretend not to see him when we met; and when he spoke I'd just say, 'Oh! it's you, is it?' If he was gay, I'd be sad, and *vice versa*, until I'd led him such a life that he'd be glad to knock under to me in everything. It was in this way that I got the upper hand of poor James Murray that's dead and gone, and brought him to such good order that he daren't so much as say his life was his own. It's the only way to manage men. They are all the same—for all the world like dogs, wanting to be kept in restraint, and frisking about here and there, half mad, if left to follow their own fancies. Ah! if my dear young lady would but be advised by me, I'd soon teach her how to bring her lover to reason."

Another deep sigh moved the snowy drapery that veiled the

bosom of Louisa, and Strathern's name was again murmured by her lips.

"Ah! there it is again—I really begin to hate him," thought Murray. "To get such a hold of her affections, and in so short a time. Why, she has not known him above five or six months; and I knew poor James Murray a good seven years before I promised to marry him. But times are changed, and so are people."

END OF VOL. I

PARIS.—PRINTED BY FAIN AND THUNOT,
28, rue Racine, near the Odeon.